

Break

Governors' feedback

"Are governing bodies the main channel through which schools and the outside world communicate with each other? Or are they just an interference, a non-event?"

This—give or take a few "institutional inputs", "feedback mechanisms" and other glories of the social scientists' vocabulary—is what the Brunel University Educational Studies Unit see as one of the main thrusts of the research task they have just persuaded the DES to allow them to undertake. Over the next three years, in exchange for £140,000, the unit, which recently linked at Brunel, will be concentrating on the ways in which governing bodies currently operate.

It sounds as if they will soon be stumbling across one or two disaffected governors. Professor Maurice Kogan, head of the department of government at Brunel, and instigator of the research, confessed to astonishment at some of the tales bandied about at the project's first meeting with its steering committee earlier this month. "London is a long way from Brunel and Birmingham, too; but the variation is whopping", he gasped.

So will the researchers be producing a code of good practice for authorities plodding in the rear? Nothing so directive as this, it seems. They hope to move into some eight schools in six or seven governors' meetings, and build up their case-study material during the first 15 months. This is where the feedback mechanisms—or what we used to call discussions—begin to operate.

"We don't want to dive in and then just dash away with the material," says Dephne Johnson, convenor of the project at Brunel. The intention is to hold seminars with those governors, and then with the academics, to discuss what there can be a two-way debate on the initial findings of the team. Towards the end of the project there will be a series of public seminars, open to any interested parties.

No decisions have yet been made on the choice of authorities or schools, though the eight will probably include one single-sex, one voluntary aided, 2 junior, and 4 secondary, of which two might be drawn from London. There is a distinct southern counties bias to the first list of possibilities, though an approach to Birmingham may be made later in the project.

Maurice Kogan is keen that the focus should not be a narrow one, that the researchers should look at ways in which outside groups who have a legitimate interest in a school's affairs get in on the governing act—or fail to do so. For example, how do Asian parents get their voices across? Normally it's through the individual teacher; they have very little representation on governing bodies at present.

Since the project will be getting into more complex areas of this kind, it might seem desirable that more of the outside appointed to the steering committee by the DES should be able to speak, say, for the ethnic minority communities. But then the department is keen to emphasize that the committee has been selected for its knowledge of and interest in school government, and not as representatives of this or that interest group.

Best buys

In the cuts-conscious classrooms of Cumbria they are now so desperate about capitalization that enterprise is rearing its head. At one comprehensive school the biology teacher is running a flourishing business breeding stick insects for sale. The profits are ploughed back into buying hearts for dissection.

Perhaps Mrs Thatcher was right after all when she said that the entrepreneurial instinct flourishes best in a cold climate. But should O level class demand on teaching teachers who are as good at business as biology?

Key words

Readable books about real classroom experiences have always been thin on the ground. So it is good to find one of the best of them con-



Sylvia Ashton-Warner

ing back into print. Together with her novel *Spencer*, and her autobiography *I Passed This Way*, Sylvia Ashton-Warner's *Teacher* (1995) is being reissued this week by Virago.

Published first in 1963, this inspiring account of her revolutionary methods of teaching Maori children to read has had considerable influence on teachers' practice both in the United States and Britain. Her idea of using children's "key words", drawn from their inner fears and tensions, in place of the stilted vocabulary of most early reading books, appealed strongly to many infant teachers bent on hastening Janet and John to an early grave. And her view that children should write their own first story books is now much less startling than it was when she began her pioneering work in New Zealand back in 1937.

For the new edition (not the first in paperback, as the blurb claims—Penguin had it on their list for a while), Virago has commissioned an introduction from Doris Russell to add to the original glowing testimonial from Sir Herbert Read. In it she attempts to link Sylvia Ashton-Warner's achievement with what she and Bertie (when he was there) were trying to do in their progressive school Beacon Hill half a century ago.

This seems a little fanciful. Whatever the Russells achieved—which was undoubtedly quite a lot—they were not, as Sylvia Ashton-Warner was, moving to struggle within the state system, not a group of children who were not part of the dominant culture, and whose family lives were often chaotic. ("Their attention span is about 10 minutes, their voices are like wild bulls", she says of a now bunch of five-year-olds.)

Teacher charts the kind of experience which many teachers in new city multi-ethnic schools are now going through. Indeed, its relevance seems greater now in this respect than when it was first published. One of its incidental messages is that you do not need to what enormous expensive materials and resources to engage children's interest in reading and writing. There must be a moral there somewhere.

Filling a gap

It is a bold venture to launch a new magazine these days. It is even bolder to do it with no outside financial backing, and no advertising (at least for the first months). But the group of people who produced the first issue of *Early Childhood* this month are so convinced of an information gap for people working with under-sevens that they have gone ahead regardless.

Barbara Brookell, the editor, says the idea started five years ago. "Before all the talk about coordination and cooperation started." The editorial team got together partly

through working at the National Nursery Examination Board (though the magazine has nothing to do with the NNEB). Barbara is director of courses there. The others—Stella Edridge, now tutor in child development at Swindon college of FE, was her assistant at the NNEB; Mary Anne Batten, from the Open University sociology department, did a research study on the history of the board.

Early Childhood is designed for all who work with young children in schools, playgroups, health and social work, day nurseries, children's homes and so on.



"Don't panic, Mr Graham, you have until March to find a job."

"We're aiming at a level between the academic journals and more chatty magazines like *Child Education*", says Barbara. About 800 people have already subscribed, at a cost of £10 a year for 12 issues (including postage). The *Early Childhood* office is at 270b, Station Road, Addlestone, Weybridge, Surrey.

Role playing

Fred Baylis emerged from Civil Service anonymity a few years ago as Secretary to the Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth. Now, as under-secretary of the Department of Employment, he has earned himself a place in the annals of the organization for economic cooperation and development.

In Paris last week, at a major OECD conference on social policies for the 1980s Mr Baylis contributed to a session on "New perspectives, roles and responsibilities". Women he suggested, would be adopting the right sort of role for the future. If they left an overcrowded labour market to unemployed or under-employed men. The chairman, the Earl of Gowrie, minister of State at Employment, no doubt thinking that was not a message he could take home to his boss, let his attention wander.

It was enough for Paul Wills, a bright Australian professor of management sciences, to ask if it would enable women to move easily on and off the labour market. Men, and policy makers, would be extremely interested to know.

Despite Mr Baylis's speech, some foreign delegates were laying bets as to whether the emphasis at the British meeting, suggesting that OECD had at last found a way of living up to its conference proceedings, for the part dominated by international political speeches in English.

But there was a notably different view from Europe, where the issue of welfare state was going to be discussed. Many of the European experts, including Professor Maurice Passmore, among the British, were talking about "evolutions" in which governments in the 1980s would be required to use traditional welfare state tools—transfer payments, regulations and the supply of market sector services.

It might be to fashion a different instrument from the one created in the 1940s, but governments are undoubtedly continuing to be only involved.

Next week

The ORACLE speaks: Virginia McKinnis, John Gray, Brian Thompson on the second volume of the Leicester Urban Findings on primary teaching style. Doak Britain: Book: Edna Billea on race and culture in nineteenth century America. Mary Bigsby on new books and technology in classroom teaching. Maths textbooks: A week's television. Extro: English.

Chess

The Flank—by way of the Centre.

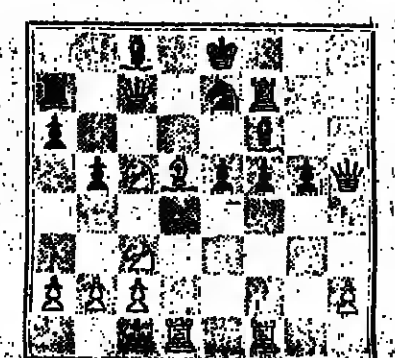
It is an ancient truism, but one none the less true for all that, that no attack can be successful unless the attacker has command, or at the very least, some hold on the centre.

The experienced attacker knows this; but nevertheless, no matter how experienced he may be, there is still a thrill of pleasure in the way an attack works when he holds the centre. In chess it is really the equivalent of holding the sword in one's hand.

What is perhaps even more pleasing is the way a central attack can finally develop into a crushing flank attack. Two pieces first dominate the centre, and then, utilizing the centre as a point from which to launch the final attack they descend upon the unfortunate enemy King and administer the coup de grace, always with one eye on the central attacking possibilities.

Thus, in the following game, which was played in the international tournament at Dortmund in 1920, White first dominates the centre and then delivers a flank coup de grace along the flank.

White: Belfon. Black: Podzichny. Sicilian Defence.



(a) Obviously quite playable; but the simplest way of dealing with it is to play 1...d5.

White's somewhat unusual sixth move is to play 6...P-KN3, transposing into an excellent variation of the Dragon Defence.

(b) This quiet move is often very effective against the Sicilian since the Bishop bears down on the centre and also attacks the knight on the King-side. However, there seems to be no good reason why Black should be allowed the counter of P-Q4 and hence White's best move is 6...P-Q4.

(c) Too many pawn moves: better was the natural 11...O-O and if then 12...P-N3, N-K1 and Black's position is very difficult to sustain.

(d) A break-through which ends in the centre of the centre which, by reason of its completeness, is a winning one.

(e) It is interesting to see how this Bishop, from its comparatively modest post on Q3, has a profound influence on the whole board.

(f) Threatening 19...R-B.

(g) With the succinct plan of N-N3-R5-R7 mate.

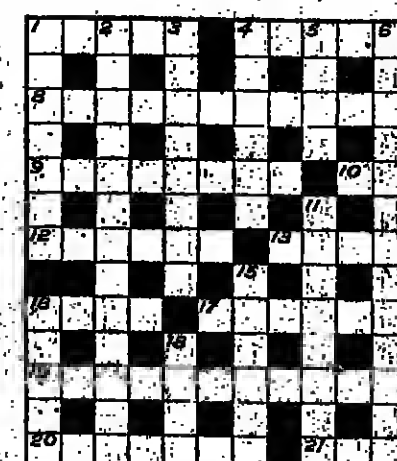
(h) Or 23...K-B1; 24...O-R8 ch; K-B2; 25...B-Q5 ch and White wins.

(i) Or 27...N-B2; 28...N-N3, Q-N3; 29...N-B1 ch; K-N2; 30...N-B2; 31...R-Q8 ch; K-N2; 32...Q-R6 mate.

(j) Because of 31...N-K1; 32...Q-R8 ch; K-N2; 33...Q-B7 ch.

Harry Golombek

Crossword No 1,210



Across

- 1 Parliamentarian in the drink (5)
- 2 Painted up an old-fashioned street (7)
- 3 4 of him in command: the ship (13)
- 4 Philosophy of perfection for one who hands out the cards (10)
- 5 European city of official rebirth (7)
- 6 Strike for those who do not work (6)
- 7 George's half hope: Mary will look in (6)
- 8 Is it a joke to Rega? (4)
- 9 Female counterpart of footman (7)
- 10 Top efficiency is not, however, due to feminine elements (13)
- 11 Strip for those who speed along (7)
- 12 Teller who is not class conscious (5)

Down

- 1 Wait and see: man (7)
- 2 A small spot of straw: a politician and not only (5)
- 3 A kind of robe (5)
- 4 Loving look: for her who is not a virgin (5)
- 5 A kind of robe (5)
- 6 A kind of robe (5)
- 7 A kind of robe (5)
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- 20 A kind of robe (5)
- 21 A kind of robe (5)

Solution to Puzzle No 1,209

1. A kind of robe (5)
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Finding new forms of protest: Cheshire schoolchildren, more careful with their clothes than their spelling, dress up in 1930s garb before a council meeting to debate spending cuts. And a relay team of Somerset teachers arrive at No 10 Downing Street with a 5,000 name petition against cuts in the education service, having run all the way from Frome.

Cuts: now the full picture may be made public

Spending on schools is threatened with yet more cuts. And as the Cabinet debates a further reduction, Her Majesty's Inspectorate is considering making public information that shows how cuts have already affected the quality of education in schools, and created wide disparities among authorities. Patricia Rowan and Biddy Passmore.

L.e.a. pressure to publish national survey

A "state of the nation" report, now being prepared by the Schools Inspectorate, will provide the only national up-to-date picture of the damage effects that spending cuts are having on the quality of education in schools. The report, which will be published by H.M.I. in a series of regional volumes, will also show the extent to which the quality of education has been affected by cuts in spending on schools. The report will be published by H.M.I. in a series of regional volumes, which will also show the extent to which the quality of education has been affected by cuts in spending on schools.

By the time the ORO replies are in, a report based on this year's returns should have been written and a decision whether to go ahead and send it to all local authorities will be taken, probably some time next week. The more serious the position revealed on what cuts are doing to the classrooms the more likely the Inspectorate are to consider it their duty to exercise their well-established independence from senior DES administrators on all political matters.

One point worth noting is that pressure to publish started before the latest well-publicized Coblentz juggling over a new round of spending cuts gave an even nastier turn to the education debate.

At a recent private meeting at which Mr Mark Carleton, the Education Secretary, sought to justify the Government's position to the Council of Local Education Authorities, it was noticeable that the Conservative spokesmen from the shires made the most telling criticisms.

Spending cuts, they said, were threatening the very items which made a priority, such as careers teaching, links with work, science, and second language teaching. It was an awkward message very much in line with what the Inspectorate had been saying quite separately to ministers as a result of what they have found in their surveys.

The State of the Nation report is separate from the short survey carried out by the H.M.I. in September, and is not intended to be a full survey of the methods chosen to calculate the new block grant method of funding local government—although that operation was able to draw on some of the same Inspectorate returns.

What's right for reading is wrong for maths

A Leicester University research project, measuring pupils' progress in basic skills and their confidence at study skills in 54 inner city schools, has found that the best way to improve reading is by using a variety of teaching styles. The project, which was carried out by a team of researchers from Leicester University, found that the best way to improve reading is by using a variety of teaching styles. The project, which was carried out by a team of researchers from Leicester University, found that the best way to improve reading is by using a variety of teaching styles.

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The threat of yet another round of education cuts provides the main burden of this week's educational news. As the recession deepens and unemployment rises, the pressure on public expenditure also mounts. The bill for social benefits goes up by around £200m for every additional 100,000 who are out of work. Those who expect the number of jobless to mount for most of next year have, therefore, to foresee a steadily increasing call on the national budget.

The recession also spells gathering gloom for one nationalized industry after another, so while the public is faced with hefty increases in charges, Sir Keith Joseph, against his better judgment, pumps more millions into British Steel, British Rail, British Shipbuilders, the National Coal Board and the rest.

The logic of the Government's economic policy argues that interest rates can only be reduced if public borrowing is restricted. This means spending cuts end/or tax increases. The extent of the cuts was still being debated in Cabinet when we went to press but if, as seems likely, around £2 billion is to be topped off public expenditure for 1981-82, all the evidence points in another swinging stab at education. Whereas a few weeks ago it was being confidently predicted that the schools would escape, while higher education bore the brunt, it now seems that local government spending will be cut by some 2 per cent—£240m—on top of the 2 per cent cut already announced in the public expenditure White Paper earlier in the year.

Cuts in higher education were already being planned before the size of the required saving was raised to the higher level. It is likely that cuts for the universities amounting to between 1 and 2 per cent will be announced; over and



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How Mr Carlisle played the game—and lost

above the other educational reductions incorporated in the delayed Rate Support Grant. Putting all this together the suggestion is that public sector education cuts at all levels could be of the order of between £120m and £130m next year.

Through the capping of the pool, the Government can make their cuts more specific in relation to public sector higher education than elsewhere in the public education budget where the usual ambiguities of the Rate Support Grant will continue after the changes initiated by Mr Heseltine. The grant will still be paid as a lump sum, leaving to the authorities a large measure of discretion as to how it should be shared out between the various services.

It is reported that Mr Carlisle has fought hard for the education service against heavy odds. Education is so large a portion of local government that any indiscriminate reduction of the Rate

Support Grant is bound to bear heavily on the schools. Housing has already been cut to the bone. The social services have no champion prepared to defend them enshrined in Cabinet. Mr Carlisle is, therefore, dangerously isolated as the representative of a great public service—this only one the Prime Minister knows much about. Some prime ministers are said to remain sentimentally attached to the departments of state where they served their apprenticeship. Others take special delight in turning end rendering them. Mrs Thatcher, unfortunately, belongs to the second category. It is no good looking to her for a sympathetic hearing.

When the HMI survey (page one) appears, there will be more hard evidence of how the cuts have already lowered standards and damaged the quality of education. In particular it will emphasize the dangerously uneven impact of what

has happened already — the zeal with which many county authorities have wielded the axe (partly because they shure the Chancellor's politics; partly, because the Rate Support Grant for many years curtailed their resources), and the defiance of many Labour-controlled boroughs.

Some confusion might be expected to follow the politically expedient transfer of the new block grant system which is designed by the Tories to rig the balance of payments in favour of Conservative areas, as Labour's RSG formula was once designed to help the Labour urban authorities. What will now happen in this confusion will add yet more severe cuts.

Those who dwell on this gloomy state of public education are liable to be chided for failing to give due prominence to all the many encouraging things which are going on. Many of these are reported in our columns from week to week. It is necessary to be a Pollyanna to believe that, notwithstanding the dire economic situation, there are plenty of success stories to tell. But nobody—not even Mr Carlisle and Lady Young, at their new bland — can afford to play down the seriousness of this latest round of personal upon cut. What it will mean in personal terms for teachers who may be displaced from their jobs is serious, but teachers would not be alone in 1981 in finding their life chances at risk if their schools are damaged.

All the criticisms of education in its most basic form will be reinforced if there are to be even more savage cuts. And who can yet say that this end of the particular downward spiral has yet been reached?

Comment

Radical thoughts from the SEO

With the new Local Government Planning Act already casting its shadow forward, there are signs elsewhere of growing concern about the place of education in local government and the historic balance of power which underlies the 1964 Education Act.

One of these comes in the form of a statement issued by Mr W. H. Petty, chief education officer for Kent, who is this year's president of the Society of Education Officers. The SEO has set up a working party on "future organization and financing of the education service". This is a reflection of "considerable dissatisfaction" with the present position.

The SEO "has always favoured a strong local democratic framework for the education service" but the latest initiative is a realistic recognition that other possibilities are being envisaged.

The Society of Education Officers is a cautious body, as you would expect, and Mr Petty himself has always been a staunch local authority man. But education's position in local government is becoming increasingly precarious. As the biggest service, education takes the biggest cuts, with no assurance that corporate managers and party caucus will act in the best interests of a service they do not understand. The SEO recognized its equivocal loyalty in the local government world, its evidence to the Layfield Committee on Local Government Finance (quoted by Dudley Fiske, the Manchester CEO, in this week's Walker lecture, see page five): "we are local government men but not at any price". Now the education service seems to be wandering if the price may not already be too high and looking around for another framework for democratic control.

Mr George Cooke, Secretary of the SEO, made clear in *The Times* last week that his own preferences lean towards "a decentralized system of single-purpose, elected education authorities". Mr Fiske's reaction to the present malaise on the other hand, has been to recognize the trend towards centralization which has extended over a long period of time—and to which many factors have contributed—and to call for a review of the reform of local administration with this trend in mind. It seems unlikely that Messrs Fiske, Cooke and Petty would all arrive at the same

conclusion, but at least they are prepared to speculate intelligently on these matters now and begin to incorporate the ground for more penetrating investigation in the future.

At the root of the relationship between the education service, the local education authorities and the Department of Education and Science is the formula for local government finance. The changes which are now taking place cannot fail to shake up the relationship and with it the distribution of power. The argument is sometimes seen as a struggle between the central Government and local government. Elizabeth House and Westminster constantly complain that they can make, but cannot execute, national policy. Mr Heseltine's new Act will make things worse, increasing the Government's negative powers, without greatly stepping up the capacity to push things forward.

The argument which concerns the SEO, however, has more to do with the position of education vis à vis the other services, and the education vis à vis local government on such. Here it is important to insist that local government exists for the services it administers, not vice versa. The worst aspect of the present period of low morale in the local education service and the cut of the local government world is that dumping down has now become the one and only concern of national policy. Local government is dominated by the need to stunt and creep the services.

So long as this is the case, the only consideration with regard to the constitutional relationship between central and local government will be the prevention of local spending. In such circumstances the SEO will be beating its collective head against a brick wall. But this will not always be so. When the economic wind changes, the pressure will ease off but the underlying questions will remain. The latest motives of distributional central Government grant to local authorities can only be regarded as a temporary measure. It is by no means too early in plan now for the reforms which will be needed within five years.

Science and gender

A recipe for increasing the numbers of girls opting for physics and chemistry was offered this week by Hoc Motley's Inspectorate in Science. The ingredients include: changes in examinations and syllabuses; include the more practical, real life and social implications of science in place of some of the more theoretical aspects. The ingredients are colling, far science courses are more of a preparation for life and

lees a preparation for A levels.

Like several other suggestions made by the Inspectorate, this is a recipe for both genders. Boys as well as girls need to have their interests stimulated and their imaginations caught by such courses and to see the relevance of them to their lives. Making a subject compulsory is the only realistic way of making it compulsory, whatever framework is erected for the curriculum or however firm the guidance on fourth-form options.

No doubt, in reiterating this exam theme from their national secondary survey, the inspectors are spelling out some of the syllabus reforms they would like to see in the new 16-plus exams now being compiled. But if more pupils—boys or girls—are to continue with science other crucial issues have to be faced.

Whether science classes are to be made to flourish by the irrelevance of these new courses or by a new order of school option schemes or frameworks for the curriculum, more trained science teachers and better equipped laboratories will be needed. Science for girls is prefaced by the now familiar rubric: that nothing is to be read as commitment to extra resources. The inspectorate seem a bit complacently to put their trust in falling trials to solve staffing shortages eventually but the question of better pay for teachers and the quality of their pay rises looms large. The secondary survey found 40 per cent of schools did not have enough labs to provide even the minimum science for all and, unlike teachers, laboratories cannot be redeployed from school to school.

Bark or bite?

Will Mr Reagan's bark prove to be worse than his bite? The newly elected American President has not barked about education all that often during his campaign, but what he has said has held little joy for those concerned with public education.

Very broadly, he is for parental choice, through tax credits and vouchers, and for letting local and state authorities do things their way (and, crossingly, with their funds). He is against Washington's burgeoning education bureaucracy, and against too much control from the centre, through federal funds. It is a grass-roots view of education, anxious to set traditional values as the radical and suspect influences at Washington.

The fears of the education establishment are that his policies will lead to an acceleration of the outflow of pupils from public to private

schools, and that federally-funded programmes which channel money into areas of educational disadvantages will be bypassed.

Liberals have found plenty to fear in Mr Reagan's assertion that the Biblical account of creation should be given equal status with the Theory of Evolution, although as *The Times* reports have pointed out, he is simply in line with a very large proportion of Americans.

But Mr Reagan's record as governor of California in the early 1970s offers some crumbs of comfort. He proved to be a pragmatist, able to accept compromises and willing to let others get on with their jobs. He has also gained a reputation for listening to his sound advisers, whose words he listens to.

Anyone watching for the first signs of a new American education policy to emerge should therefore pay more attention to what Mr Reagan's newly-formed educational think tank has to say, than the new President's own platform utterances.

Early indications are that the group, headed by Glenn Campbell of Stanford University's Hoover Institute, is not in favour of major cuts in federal education spending.

Victory salute from Mr Reagan



Victory salute from Mr Reagan

No comment

"That may be due to the fact that I am all the villages in the public consultation exercise," said David Lightfoot, Staffordshire education committee chairman, on why he was not an apparent surge in the local education authority. From *The Staffordshire Star*.

NEWS

Graded tests likely in new 16 plus

By Bob Doe

The new 16-plus exams in modern languages are almost certain to be based on the novel graded tests of everyday communication skills, according to the Centre for Information on Language Teaching (CILT). Some may be possible to sit at O level in French without knowing a word of the language. According to CILT's director, Mr John Tim, the language panels of the exam boards now considering arrangements for the new 16-plus are very sympathetic to this graded tests approach. CILT itself, and the exam Councils are also very keen to see it.

Uncertainty over places on training body

By Bert Lodge

A new organization to look at the quality of teacher education outside the universities is to be set up early in the new year. The principals' associations, and lecturers' union NATFHE, and the main school teacher unions will be represented. The number of representatives to be elected to the National Union of Teachers has still to be resolved. Before the committee's first meeting, on January 28, the NUT is currently boycotting the Government's advisory committee on the supply and education of teachers (ASSET) because of dissatisfaction with the number of seats it was offered.

It is understood that unless it is demanding that the number of school teacher union seats on the new body be increased, a compromise will be reached. The National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers is likely to agree with it.

The setting up of the new body follows a resolution passed at a joint conference last January at NATFHE and the Department of Education for a joint standing committee for education in the public sector.

Miss Jeanine Bock, NATFEE national secretary, said this week there was a feeling among teachers that ASSET was too preoccupied with the "supply" element of this at the present time to consider other areas of teacher education. "As in our view it is not adequately constituted to deal with these areas because it is so heavily weighted towards local authority representation."

Members of the Association of County Councils and of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities agreed that officers should instruct

than writing, and step-by-step multiple tests like those used in music teaching, this approach was originally devised as an alternative to what some saw as the irrelevance to language teaching of the old style exams.

In some experiments graded tests dramatically increased the numbers of pupils wishing to continue their language studies, though there is some disagreement about whether the tests or the everyday language skills are behind this higher motivation.

According to a report on graded tests from CILT this week, this approach is likely to be the shape of things to come because of its careful definition of objectives for each level.

The CILT report is a handbook for teachers interested in developing the new graded tests approach, and it describes some of the 50 schemes in six languages in use or being devised.

The Yorkshire Regional Exam Board already accepts level 4 in one graded tests scheme as qualifying for a CSE award and three other boards are about to follow suit.

Now the Manchester-based GCE board, the JMB, is considering a scheme for the 16-plus in which candidates could get the equivalent of an O level in French without having to write a word of the language.

There would be optional tests of each of the four skills—reading, speaking, listening and writing—at

a basic or extended level. The lowest grade (G) would be awarded for passes in only two of these tests and on A for passes in all eight. Grade C could be obtained by passing reading, speaking and listening at both levels, though "passing" is likely to mean scores of 80 per cent or more.

The JMB is part of the northern group of CSE and GCE boards assigned special responsibility for developing 16-plus national criteria for modern languages. The GCE board emphasized this week that the new scheme was only one of several possibilities being looked at.

Graded objectives in modern languages by Ann Harding, Brian Page and Sheila Rowell, CILT, 20 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1. £3.75.

Liberal anxiety as Reagan takes the reins

The landslide victory of Mr Ronald Reagan in this week's American presidential election will mean major changes in national education policies if the new President acts on his campaign pledges.

Mr Reagan has said he will abolish the Cabinet-level Education Department, which was carved out of the giant Health, Education and Welfare Department under President Carter federal old to education grew by 73 per cent. Mr Reagan wants to replace the present system of allocating national funds for use in specific programmes—by a system of block grants to state and local authorities.

During his campaign Mr Reagan said that the Biblical story of creation should be taught in schools alongside the Theory of Evolution, which has "great flaws".

Such statements have alarmed liberal educators.

Beat the vandals strategy

by Diane Spencer

A plan to beat vandalism in schools is outlined in a Home Office report published this week.

It consists of 30 strategies such as a "defensive" one which seeks to reduce opportunities to commit damage by using glass substitutes and toughened glass; or the "disarmament strategy" whereby potential weapons are removed—paint spray cans from local hardware shops to be kept behind counters instead of on open shelves. (These are more often stolen than bought.)

The report warns that some measures could cost more than the damage that is being done, while others could have negative side effects. Barbed wire, wire-mesh grilles and bars on windows make schools look like fortresses "which many headmasters find hard to reconcile with their educational aims."

Resident caretakers and vigilant neighbours can be effective deterrents, but intrusive alarms, although popular, are less useful. They are expensive to maintain and do little to reduce external damage.

The report recommends frequent application of anti-climb paint on convenient drain pipes, as well as fitting them with sturdy spikod collars.

Schools should send letters to encourage parents to exercise moral control over their children outside school hours and during the holidays and tell them of the social and financial costs of vandalism.

The report is based on a study of vandalism in Manchester schools, carried out by the Crime Prevention Unit, Home Office Research Study No. 62, by F. J. Gladstone, £3.90.



Uniformed security guards have been employed by Dulwich College, an independent school in South London, to protect boys from assault by local gangs. The guards escort pupils from the school gates to the local railway station every evening.

College looks safe after meeting

by Sarah Bayliss

The future of Comba Lodge, the further education staff college sponsored by local authorities, appears more secure after a crucial meeting this week.

Members of the Association of County Councils and of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities agreed that officers should instruct

agents to explore terms for a new lease at the college in Bloomsbury, London. There had been fears that Conservative on the ACC's policy committee would stand against continuation of the lease.

The college, which has already had its grant of £24,000 approved for next year, runs a wide range of management courses or staff and governors in further and higher education.

Cooking up novel ways to raise cash for meals

Stephen Cohen

Not only slot machines and games that Somerset County Council has recommended to head teachers as ways of bringing in money for the school meals service.

Lotteries, raffles, special events and fund-raising parties are to be considered.

Paraphernalia are to be sold at fundraising sales of old books and old clothes.

And, in the case of the county's plans, the council has the chance of a Christmas hamper.

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reced, lotteries or draws for example, or slot machine of one kind or another in or near dining rooms," he said in a letter to heads, asking for their help.



He made it clear this week that following adverse reaction to press reports of "Space Invaders" being installed in dining rooms, he was talking about the use of sixth form centres, football games, and

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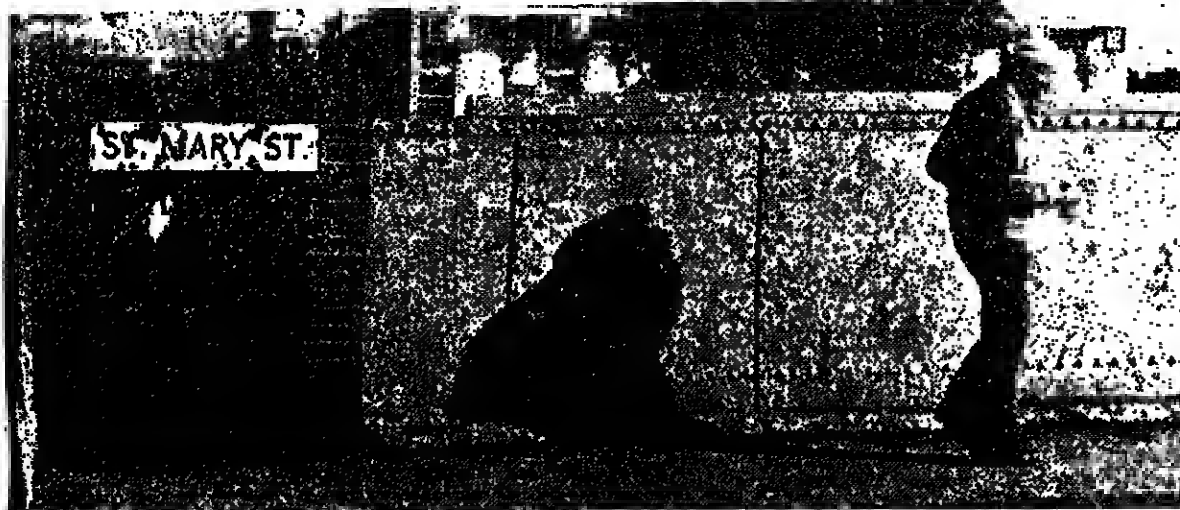
After Bristol, Southampton? Anthony Blackham reports on the danger signs in another poor inner city area

Heads in the sand?

Six months after the Bristol St Paul's riots, nothing seems to have been done to forestall similar outbreaks elsewhere. "People may be more aware of the problems, but there is no action with any sense of urgency," a spokesman from the Commission for Racial Equality said. The particular difficulties of school-leavers from ethnic minorities was in danger of being overlooked against a background of general youth unemployment.

However, in St Mary's in Southampton, community and social workers have noted parallels with St Paul's. A red-light, run-down area, it has all the hallmarks of inner-city multiple deprivation. Its population is largely Asian and West Indian. Alan, like St Paul's, is an enclave of poverty in a city of comparative wealth.

The recession is hitting local industry. Youth unemployment almost doubled this year, from 775 in September, 1979, to the present level of about 1,400. Meanwhile, successful job placements following the Youth Opportunities Programme have tumbled from over 50



Like St Paul's, St Mary's is an enclave of poverty in a city of comparative wealth

per cent down to 30 per cent. In this context, black and coloured school-leavers find themselves at the bottom of the job market.

"In areas like this, the local authorities and councillors won't face up to the realities of discrimination on their own doorsteps," Richard Braun, the local community relations officer, said. "They'll just bury their heads in the sand and say that sort of thing doesn't go on here. There is a real need for positive policies. In St Mary's but no steps have been taken by the authorities to help unemployed kids in the city centre."

The measures sought by Mr Braun are positive-discrimination policies at the city council and the appointment of "outreach" careers officers.

"Kids around here miss out on the informal, word-of-mouth contacts which white kids have and they also tend to shy away from the established agencies."

The Commission for Racial Equality agrees with Mr Braun and in a recent report, *Ethnic Minority Youth Unemployment* (July 1980), it specifically recommended to the Government that "as a matter of urgency the number of outreach workers appointed within the careers service should be increased".

In Southampton, however, there is no intention to follow up such a

proposal, presumably because of the small number of immigrant families. But in St Mary's, the disadvantages of young people from ethnic minorities loom as large as anywhere in the country.

The local careers service is reluctant to accept the CRC's interpretation. Southampton Careers Office points to figures for unemployed Asian and West Indian teenagers and says that the proportions are not greatly dissimilar from white school-leavers. But no investigation challenges the reliability of official statistics.

So the true level of youth unemployment among ethnic minorities is hard to gauge, and the situation highlighted in Bristol is being repeated throughout the country, it is claimed.

Riot inquiry: teachers 'intimidated by I.e.a'

by David Lister

A local TUC public inquiry into the riot at St Paul's, Bristol, last April opened in the city at the weekend. Allegations that teachers had been "intimidated" by the Avon authority from giving evidence.

The inquiry was organized by the Bristol Trades Union Council and chaired by Mr Ian Mikardo, Labour MP for Bath and Wells.

Avon education department and the county police authority refused to give evidence to the Bristol TUC inquiry, saying they had already given evidence to the House of Commons Home Affairs sub-committee.

In a confidential letter to all the county's head teachers, Mr Geoffrey Crump, the director of education, said there had been "uninformed and ill-judged criticisms" of the authority since April.

"He went on: 'In that some of these criticisms have come from inside the service, I have felt it appropriate to write to you expressing the hope that the efforts made by the authority will not be the subject again of unfounded and inappropriate criticism.'

Mrs Pat Forrest, leader of the opposition Labour group on Avon education committee, told the inquiry that she was aware that a

letter had gone to head teachers, and she added that teachers appearing before the inquiry were showing "courage".

Mr Ian Montey, giving evidence on behalf of the Avon National Union of Teachers branch and one of the authors of an Avon NUT report on the riot which was critical of some aspects of the authority's policy, said afterwards that some teachers could have been intimidated by the letter.

He also told the inquiry that Avon may not be claiming its full entitlement under Section 11, government aid for ethnic minorities.

An Avon County Council spokesman said: "Mr Crump made no attempt to intimidate or suppress opinion from the teachers. He wished to point out however that while the authority had no objection at all to the expression of opinion and welcomed constructive suggestions he hoped that the efforts of the authority and the teachers would not be the subject again of unfounded and inappropriate criticism."

"On the question of Section 11, the authority is constantly reviewing its requirements and this includes regularly looking at ways of maintaining the amount of resource input it can achieve from all sources, including Section 11."

FE ratios to worsen as recruitment is halved

by Bert Lodge

Anticipating recruitment of further education teachers over the next five years will be only half what it was five years ago, lecturers heard at a conference this week.

Meanwhile, staff-student ratios will worsen and the FE teaching force will shrink by 1,000 a year until the middle of the decade.

Mr Edward Simpson, Deputy Secretary of Teachers' Planning and Statistics DES, admitted that Government predictions of student numbers in further education had been high. The immediate contraction of the teaching body required urgent action to correct the balance and make the need for staff development more important. But he could offer no help when lecturers' training for FE teachers would be made compulsory.

The conference organized jointly

by the lecturers' union Natfhe and the Association of Principals of Colleges at Stoke Rochford conference centre, was told that about 6,000 teachers entered further education in 1975-76. But estimates of future student numbers had been high, particularly for 1979-80 when enrolment was "very substantially below what was predicted".

Signs this term, however, were of a more buoyant recruitment, though not sufficient to offset the downward trend of the previous year. Together with the increase in staff-student ratios determined by the Government, the intake of recruits would have to drop to maybe no more than 3,000 a year and by 1984 the current total of 78,000 would have to be reduced to 74,000.

But Mr Simpson could not predict when induction training, recommended by the Hovock report in 1975 and endorsed by the Government in 1977, would be made com-

Preparation for a life of leisure

by Biddy Passmore

Those about to start a life of leisure should be properly prepared, Minister Dr Rhodes Boyson said last week.

He was referring not to the growing number of people in the dole queue but to the leisure number reaching the age of retirement—1,500 a day at the moment.

"Pre-retirement education is an integral part of continuing education," he told the annual meeting of the Pre-Retirement Association in London. "Provision, however, was patchy and fell far short of the ideal." There is a need for some national focus for the development of PRE which can both a service to the public and promote widespread recognition of its importance," he said.

Many people nearing retirement were alert, lively minded, intelligent and purposeful, he said. But the young tended to off as spent forces those who never see 50 again.

"There's a tendency these days to forget the Florence Nightingale was still a formidable force for hospital service reform in the eighties," that Sir Winston Churchill had "his finest hour" in his eighties and that many an artist had gone through an Indian Summer in his or her seventies and eighties.

(Dr Boyson is an alert 66-year-old 55.)

Working girls know little about contraception

Interviews with 127 working girls aged between 16 and 21 showed that most had received only minimal information on birth control, sex education at school, and negligible advice on the matter from their parents.

A survey showed that more than two-thirds of the sample had the risk of pregnancy.

The authors of the report, Dr Lowie and Anne Smith, say that much more should be done to promote contraceptive advice in schools. "Attitudes towards sex control," a survey among "girls" is available from: Department of Management Science, UMIST, Sackville Street, Manchester M60 1QD.

Two travel awards

The Stanley Hewitt Memorial Fund is offering two travel awards each of £500 to students and teachers to study abroad in another country. Please send SAE for application forms to K. Baird, 22 Bourne Road, Colchester, Essex, CO1 1JH. Closing date is February 28.

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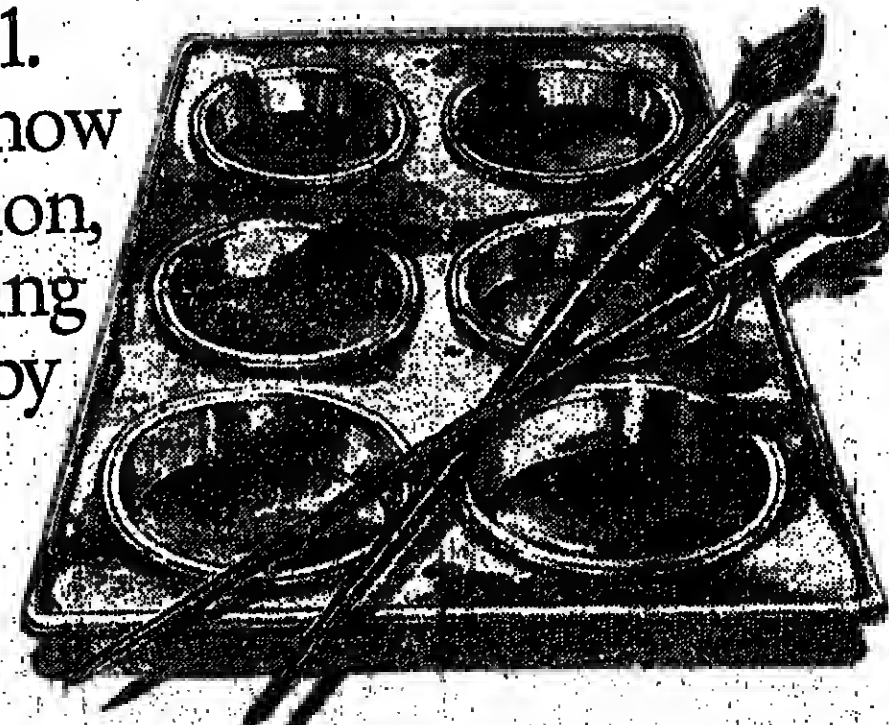
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Full details and application forms (s.a.e. please) from: The Bookings Secretary, Educational Courses, 15 Main Street, Garsington, Barton-on-Trent, Staffs. Tel. 0592 71827.

OVERSEAS NEWS

Australia

Private fees paid by one in five

by Bill Purvis

A record number of Australia's three million pupils now attend private fee-paying schools in preference to government schools.

Figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics show that the number of children attending private schools rose by 12,000 last year to just over 630,000. In the same period the number attending government schools fell by 18,000—or about 1 per cent.

This means that 21 per cent of all pupils now attend private schools—a figure which is being quoted as evidence that Australian parents believe their children will get a better education in 'private' schools.

However, a spokesman for the Education Department said this was pure nonsense. Without research into the reasons for the changes it was premature to ascribe them to any one factor, he said.

The changes could reflect shifts in the pattern of population. The disproportionate increase in Roman Catholic school enrolments could reflect either a growth in the proportion of Roman Catholic families in Australia, or an increase in the number of children with Roman Catholic parents.

West Germany

Survey points to slow crumbling of social barriers over 20 years

by Wellington Long

Social barriers in West German universities and at work have been broken down considerably during the last 20 years, according to a recent study commissioned by the Ministry for Education and Science.

A study of about 33,000 men and women between the ages of 19 and 30 revealed that:

- the number of students from working class homes has risen from 40 per cent in 1961 to 14 per cent in 1979
- more than 30 per cent of young Germans reached social and professional positions better than those of their fathers, "both objectively and subjectively" almost immediately after starting to work
- whereas more than 60 per cent of working class children born before 1945 grew up to become workers themselves, the figure for those born between 1949 and 1954 is 46 per cent, declining to 42 per cent for those born between 1955 and 1960.

"The so-called self-recruitment of workers is losing all meaning for the young generation," the Ministry commented.

Minister Juergen Schmude

ordered the DM1m (£215,000) study to determine the changing relationship between education and employment.

The study disclosed that although only about 5 per cent of West Germans between 19 and 30 were studying or taking advanced training in 1960, about 22 per cent of that group were doing so in 1979.

The number of pupils qualifying for university rose by 31 per cent during the past six years. But the numbers of working class children qualifying rose by 50 per cent.

Women generally and their studies and begin working earlier than men, the study showed, partly because the careers women choose require less training and partly because many of the men must interrupt their studies or training to perform their national military service.

Despite much talk of an "academic proletariat" and jobless university graduates, Federal Labour Office analysts incorporated into the study estimated that the number of unemployed who have neither studied nor acquired a skill is double that of those with professional qualifications.

The main groups of university graduates experiencing difficulty in finding work seem to be teachers,

psychologists and social workers.

About 55 per cent of all university graduates work for the federal, state or communal governments, three-quarters of them in education, the remainder in administration.

Private business absorbs about 40 per cent of graduates, and one-fifth of them move into jobs previously held by a person without university training, a reflection of the degree to which modernization causes required qualifications to be upgraded.

But Ms Winfried Schluffke, education expert of the Institute of the German Economy, complains that the universities fail to prepare graduates for the realities of working life.

A survey of 400 business firms showed the most common complaint about newly-hired graduates was their unrealistic expectations of income and possibilities of advancement, and difficulty in adapting to the realities of the working place "such as punctuality".

Engineers come out the universities best equipped to go to work, according to the institute, with economists, lawyers, and those schooled in the natural and social sciences being ranked in descending order.

New Zealand

Exchange and suffer

by Lindsay Hayes

Primary school teachers on exchange in Britain are "financially embarrassed" because their New Zealand salaries fail to meet their needs.

The New Zealand Educational Institute halloos the scheme could be in jeopardy unless there are enough New Zealand teachers with private means who can afford to participate in the scheme.

The teachers' plight, brought about by the higher cost of living coupled with the deteriorating exchange rate for the New Zealand dollar, led to requests for an overseas allowance to help the exchange teachers make ends meet but the proposal was rejected by Cabinet.

There are 20 teachers each from New Zealand and Britain on the present one-year exchange.

Canada

IB gets a foothold

The International Baccalaureate has been implemented for the first time in a Canadian state school. The Sir Winston Churchill High School in Calgary began its IB studies last September with 30 students seeking for the two-year programme.

OVERSEAS NEWS

United States

Report warns of growth in science 'illiteracy'

by Clive Cookson

WASHINGTON
An overwhelming proportion of the American population is drifting toward virtual scientific and technological illiteracy, warns a government report on the state of science education in the United States.

The study was conducted jointly by the Education Department (ED) and the National Science Foundation (NSF) on orders from President Carter (TES, April 4). It has two separate sections, one dealing with basic science education for the general population, and the other with the specialist education of professional scientists and engineers.

The first part, which focuses on the decline of science in American secondary schools, makes the most depressing reading. It is made particularly gloomy by the way it echoes last month's report by the Commission of the Humanities, which found that the teaching of subjects such as languages, literature and history was also deteriorating (TES, October 17). The decline seems to cover the whole spectrum of the school curriculum.

The second part, on specialist science and engineering education, is more optimistic. Standards in university science and engineering departments remain high, the report says, despite a shortage of up-to-date laboratory equipment and in some fields of academic staff. (Potential future teachers are being lured away by the better salaries and more modern facilities in industry.)

At present the United States does not have enough engineers and computer scientists to satisfy the rapidly growing demand for their services, but projections by the NSF and ED indicate that this manpower shortage will be over by 1990.

The educational gap between science specialists and the large majority who leave school or college "with only the most rudimentary notions of science, mathematics,

and technology portends trouble in the decades ahead," the report warns, because it means that important national decisions involving science and technology will be made increasingly on the basis of ignorance and misunderstanding.

The study contrasts the declining emphasis on science and mathematics in secondary schools with the "vigorous training" in these fields provided by Japan, West Germany and the Soviet Union for all their citizens.

In Japan, national guidelines call for 25 per cent of classroom time in lower secondary schools to be devoted to mathematics and science, and nearly all college-bound students take three scientific and four mathematical subjects at high school.

"The overall picture in Germany is one of a very high level of science and mathematics literacy among college graduates as well as a strong science/mathematics understanding among the general population." All Soviet children have to complete five years of physics, four of chemistry and up to four of biology; calculus taken by half a million Americans in the last year of high school or in college, is part of the school curriculum for five million Russians.

Only one third of the United States' school districts require their graduates to take more than one year of science and mathematics, the report says. Like the Commission on the Humanities, it claims that the current emphasis on basic skills has made matters worse.

Science is not generally viewed as 'basic' to its role is diminished in such programmes, while the 'basic' skill involved in mathematics is only simple computation. Problems arise when the acquisition of 'basic skills' becomes the curriculum rather than a discipline upon which students can build their ability to deal with more complex situations and problems.

France

President told all pupils should learn data processing as routine subject

by Jane Jessel

PARIS
Data processing ought to be taught as a subject like any other, and all French children should learn it, according to a report submitted to the President of France, M. Valéry Giscard d'Estaing last week.

Professor Jean-Claude Simon, author of the report *The Education and Computerization of Society*, found his conclusion on "the indispensable socio-economic fact" that society has entered an era of computerization in which machines are not only complementing man's work, but also replacing him in a number of jobs. It is therefore most important, he says, that all should learn to use this new tool.

But he maintains that it is not

enough to learn just how to push buttons on a computer. Pupils should understand the new way of thinking which computerization has introduced to everyday life. "Data processing," says the report, "is quite distinct from computer techniques". It is a new way of thinking which covers all domains of knowledge, scientific and literary, too important to be left in the hands of a few specialists.

School is the obvious starting place, says the report, and it recommends a much wider role for data processing in education. Professor Simon rejects its introduction to the nursery schools, but hopes to see it in primary schools.

He envisages a place for it as a subject in the *baccalauréat* and the creation of an association for

teachers entering secondary and lycée teaching. The subject should be reflected in all sectors of educational life, including the universities and grande écoles, some of which could specialize in it.

Since this will obviously take time to set up, the report proposes as an intermediate step the gradual introduction of courses open to all pupils in the colleges (the first stage of secondary education) and the lycées.

The report is in line with current French technological education, which includes a programme to introduce 10,000 microcomputers to lycées by 1986 (TES, May 9). However, this programme is seen more as a means of transmitting information in all subjects, than a new subject in itself.

Soviet Union

Western IQ tests can be useful

by Kenneth Shaw

The methods and theories of French educational tests who specialise in IQ and other tests could be of value to Soviet educators, according to a report from the Moscow State University.


Admitting that tests of some sort are necessary to monitor the cognitive activities of children as they grow up, Ms E. K. Arifova stresses that such control can be improved by studying the conditions in which tests are carried out in the teacher-pupil interaction system.

The Soviet report, which traces the history and development of testing in France since the beginning of this century, claims that the influence of Marxist ideas in education and psychology is now strong throughout the world.

The implication of the research programmes now current in Moscow State and other centres in the USSR, however, is that even the Soviet scholars have something to learn from Western methods and ideas in this field, even if it is only to get to know what not to do.

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Fiji's temporary apartheid

Bill Purvis on a deeply divided school system, in a country where both sides are hungry for education and a unique university caters for the lucky few

SUVA

The visitor to Fiji needs to spend only a few hours in the country to realize the population consists of two quite distinct racial groups, Fijians and Indians, joined by a common language, English.

About half of 600,000-strong population is Indian and 45 per cent is Fijian. The remaining five per cent is a mixture of Chinese, Europeans and Australians.

The nation's education system clearly reflects the great divide. There are separate Indian and Fijian schools with just a few multi-racial ones, mostly in the capital, Suva.

Government policy is that, eventually, all institutions will be open to all races—but the key word is eventually.

A senior official in the education department told me: "We feel multi-racialism will be a very long-term affair. If a programme of forced integration were introduced it would be greatly resisted. It has got to evolve. The programme has made some headway since independence in 1970, but the Indian community must continue to make sure that its community feels that it is being neglected."

Such separation is reflected in the country's voting system and in the allocation of parliamentary seats according to racial origin.

One reason for such policies is that the two main groups have little in common. Apart from the obvious differences in language, religion, culture and dress, the groups tend to live in different areas with most Indians living in the three main towns, while many villages and island communities are 100 per cent Fijian. Even in sport there are clear differences. Fijians are almost fanatical about rugby, but Indians prefer hockey and soccer.

However both groups are hungry for education. Although education in Fiji is not compulsory, 99 per cent of children attend school until they are 11 and the figure for 13-year-olds is 97 per cent.

Fiji's school population in 1979 was 170,000, nearly 30 per cent of the total population, and national expenditure on education was about £20m, about 21 per cent of all government expenditure and the largest single item in the national budget.

Even with this massive commitment the Government has extended its role in education until it can now provide free education for all pupils up to the age of 13.

Education for pupils over the age of 13 depends on the parents' ability to pay, or the availability of aid provided by church schools or of scholarships.

But even with good schooling the prospects for leavers are not bright. Unemployment is high and would be even higher if so many of the young people, under-employed on small farms or in small businesses, were registered as out-of-work.

As in so many developing countries the brightest prospects are careers in the government service. However, there are limited and there is also the realization that a small country can absorb only so many bureaucrats.

This was spelt out recently by the Minister of Education, Mr Semei Sikivou.

Speaking at a graduation ceremony at one of Fiji's 28 technical vocational schools, Mr Sikivou warned against the risk of producing a "nation of pen-pushers".

The Minister said many youngsters leaving secondary school seemed to consider it beneath their dignity to work with their hands.

To ease the situation, the Education Department plans more technical and agricultural colleges to provide the necessary courses for entry to the workforce.

At the apex of the educational pyramid in Fiji is the University of the South Pacific, in Suva. This unique institution, established in 1968, has an enrolment of about 1,500 full-time students. It is a regional university, funded and administered by countries in the South Pacific. Fiji is the biggest and most important of them.

From Fiji but the rest come from many different scattered South Pacific island states—including students from the islands of Niue, Nine, Tokelau and Rarotonga.

Together these four island states have a total population of 22,000. They contribute 25 per cent of the regional financial contribution to the university.

The school of education is the most important of the four university schools in terms of student numbers.

Of the university's full-time enrolment this year, almost half were engaged in some education course. The vice-chancellor, Professor James J. Muri, a graduate of the University of the South Pacific, said the school of education, founded in 1968, had awarded medical degrees to four graduates.

It is the first professional school of the University of the South Pacific. When the university was founded it was decided not to establish such schools as law or architecture because the demand for graduates was likely to be restricted. After 12 years there is apparently no greater demand.

What has developed since 1968 is a programme of university extension centres throughout the South Pacific. These institutions provide a variety of courses for local students.

In the late 1950s French was the principal language taught at all levels. Since then English has become by far the most popular language with parents. Strangely enough, though, English is taught to Fijian pupils in Italy that in France and Germany or in the Netherlands and Denmark.

The language taught to 55 per cent of the students is French, and the remainder is taught in English.

Reasons for this are not clear, but the preference, as to the language to be taught, is a matter of government policy. The school of education is a regional university, presented as a regional university, and the importance of the school of education is a regional matter.

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Parents in Italy queue all night for English language places

Project to ease 'explosive' situation?

by Rita di Giuseppe

VERONA
"ILSE" is not a hurricane but it may very well take Italy's educational system by storm.

Literally, the teaching of languages in elementary school is a foreign language project now being tried out with two thousand pupils, aged 10 to 11.

Normally the Italian school system introduces the pupil to a second language to the lower secondary school, which starts at 11. The only exception to this rule are the private elementary schools.

ILSE (August 8) which began foreign language teaching in the first grade, giving pupils a head start on their language studies when they move into secondary schools.

Until the late 1950s French was the principal language taught at all levels. Since then English has become by far the most popular language with parents. Strangely enough, though, English is taught to Fijian pupils in Italy that in France and Germany or in the Netherlands and Denmark.

The situation grew from being tense to explosive, and emergency measures were passed. The equal rights of all other languages available, or other English classes, grew longer and longer each year, and some parents would even take a cot and thermos to the school the night prior to registration and bivouac on the school playgrounds. It was the right of freedom of choice, instances of tension and heated arguments among queuing parents and towards the school administrators were not infrequent.

To avoid the unsightly spectacle of rioting parents a new criterion was established: each student would be assigned to a particular language class, available, according to the opinion of the board of teachers.

These assignments, not always impartial, gave way to even more serious protests. The part of parents' anger, one episode saw a student father facing a school secretary with a shot gun because he was not satisfied with the allocation given for not assigning his daughter to an English class.

But perhaps the most alarming sign of the situation was the resignation of teachers, who were the less gifted, pupils' languages other than English, arguing that they would leave school anyway at 14 and "not make use" of the language training.

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LETTERS

Side issue of fifth-form 'truancy'

Sir—Your editorial comment on the "truancy" which may be generated by allowing fifth year examinations to have time off school (October 24) could prove a dangerous red herring, drawing attention away from the real problem.

The custom of latting GCE and CSE candidates stay at home arises mainly from the lack of accommodation since desks have been moved to the examination room. It happens only while the examinations

are in progress and by the time CSE has finished it is the summer, leaving time for the fifth year to leave in any case. The truth is that only the corollary of those examinations prevents fifth year truancy from being far greater than it is. It is surely naive to think that youngsters with no examination in view can see any virtue in education per se, however good or meaningful it is. They attend school because they have to, and if they can dodge they do.

This is not cynicism. Before the successive failings of the school leaving age, who but prospective examinees remained in school? How many of the former secondary modern schools which did not offer examinations had a fifth form? If truancy is ever to be brought in check we shall have to do more than just improve the relevance and attractiveness of the fare we offer. Important though that may be. We need to make truancy unattractive. Maybe this calls for a mixture of

effective deterrents aimed at both parents and children, coupled with some positive incentives (such as having to put in a specified number of attendances before qualifying for leaving school). However I am quite sure that fifth formers on examination leave can have no significant effect when compared to other factors.

W. G. BAINES,
Whitgift Road,
Willows,
Grimsby.

Why graded tests mean finer work at every level

Sir—Much as I sympathize with Mr Fellows' comments (Letters, October 17) about the lack of success in much modern language teaching in Britain, I must take issue over some of his statements and comparisons.

If he, like myself, has taught in a German *Gymnasium* then he should know better than to make comparisons between able German pupils and less able English pupils. CSE exams in this country are intended for pupils below the top 25 to 30 per cent of the school population. Such pupils do not attend *Gymnasien* beyond the *Orientierungstufe*. He should also know that German pupils' relative success in *Gymnasien* is due (a) to the fact that English is a main subject, consistent failure in which means demotion to a less academic school and (b) to the power of the mark book in Germany in maintaining class discipline and work rate. It is not due to the teaching, which, despite his comments, is not always carried out in the target language and is not always of a high pedagogic standard.

If Mr Fellows has ever taught in a comprehensive like ours, where language teachers are usually the best of their kind, he will be more measured in his blanket criticisms.

We support and operate graded tests for these reasons:

First, they are an encouragement to achievement justly rewarded at

intermediate stages in the learning process. Secondly, for lower ability pupils who give up foreign languages before the fourth year they provide a tangible recognition of achievement in minimum language skills in a restricted set of contexts.

We do not view these tests as replacing O level and CSE examinations, nor do we see them as more than a trifle for able pupils whose reward is likely to be obtained at a higher level. Mr Fellows does seem to be ignorant of present CSE grade five levels—such a grade is indeed low and no one pretends that it represents a very high achievement.

Certainly graded tests at level four would not be an indication of fluency, but it is certainly no lowering of standards over conventional language CSE passes. Pupils whose ceiling is CSE grade five would not in any case represent the average pupil. In fact only about 10 per cent of those entered for CSE do that badly; in other terms pupils whose terminal achievement are that low represent about 5 per cent of the total number of candidates entering foreign language exams as O CSE or 16 plus.

M. J. SLATER,
Head of Modern Languages,
Vale of Acolcham School,
Brigg, South Humberside.

Explosive TV material

Sir—I am a chemistry teacher currently on half-term holiday. While watching *Crucible* television at lunchtime (Dorchester, 1.30 pm), I was surprised and disturbed to hear details of the ingredients of gunpowder together with instructions for its manufacture.

Transmission of this kind of information is questionable at the best of times, but during the half-term holiday immediately preceding Guy Fawkes night it is dangerously irresponsible. Children are frequently inquisitive about explosive mixtures at this time of year, and it would be naive to suppose that at least a few of the many who must have been watching would not have been tempted to put the ideas into practice, perhaps with disastrous consequences.

MICHAEL J. FIELDS,
147 Dredon Avenue,
Mossley Hill,
Liverpool.

Strategies for poor maths

Sir—Mr Bentall's letter, "Why more should be done for remedial maths" (October 17), is timely. The Schools Council's Low Attainers in Mathematics Project has almost completed its work and the two reports from it are being written. The first records the variety of current provision observed in the large number of schools visited. The second report is the result of a detailed survey of the literature and presents in an accessible way research findings that are particularly relevant to the teaching of low attainers in mathematics.

Plans are already in hand for further work which it is hoped will bring together groups of teachers to develop better strategies and courses for these pupils.

JOHN HERSEE,
Chairman of the Schools Councils Mathematics Committee.

Learning together—from cradle to secondary school

Sir—I was very interested in the report on nursery centres. Although it was largely well informed and gave a balanced view of the problems and triumphs inherent in such establishments, it failed to mention other centres where there is no question of feeling "belonged or threatened" mainly because of the constant and continuing support of the local I.O.E. Rochdale is a case in point. In January 1977, it opened a joint social services and education nursery unit and took the bilingual step of attaching it to a large primary school, of which it was the first appointed head teacher. A second unit followed in September 1978 and it is also intended that this unit will eventually be attached to a primary school.

Both units share their total accommodation and the respective social services and education staffs are fully integrated into one team and the children are in no way segregated.

We feel that this type of unit is a viable and highly effective way of providing nursery education for families and children in greatest need. The obvious advantages of being part of a much larger educational environment are very attractive, from both the financial point of view and perhaps more important, the professional.

Staff can and do work in the schools. In-service training programmes and the necessary support system are encouraged to become far more continuous than they would normally be in a more isolated situation.

The opportunities to follow a child's progress from the toddler stage to the end of his primary schooling make the teachers' task more meaningful and the child's life more stable and less likely to be disturbed by changing schools and having to adjust to a completely new set of adults. It is quite possible for a child to enter his unit at nine months old and remain in a gradually widening but familiar set of relationships until he is 10 years old.

Because the units share the same governors and parent teacher associations, the school there is a more integrated and supportive environment. Parents are encouraged to become far more active in the school and work alongside the staff and carry on working into school throughout

their child's primary years. Mothers who once thought they were alone now have friends and a support system which does not end when their child leaves the unit. The extended day care can also be offered to children of normal school age should circumstances require it.

As we are now faced with the prospect of falling rolls and empty classrooms, perhaps it is not too much to hope that other schools will follow Rochdale's example and grasp the opportunities to provide community nursery education in a more economical fashion than by establishing separate and often very expensive units.

C. F. HALL,
Headteacher,
Queensway School, Rochdale.

Flaw in the mechanics

Sir—Mr George Walker's excellent and timely article on bringing Pliaton into the schools (October 24) contains one comment which I would like to query.

He suggests that education is personal development in contrast to different from education directed at providing society with the engine it needs. I cannot follow this dictum. I suggest that we have in our schools hosts of young people with a natural flair for engineering, who are lacking the proper encouragement for this personal potential.

At the nursery stage, children are very properly surrounded by pins, nuts, bolts, cogs, spanners and the like. But this sort of stimulus is not appropriately carried forward in the primary stage. The engineering strand of education just dies.

At the secondary stage, where it belatedly re-emerges, many potential engineers are frustrated by a unimaginative routines of metal work and technical drawing when they are longing to get their hands on a machine—such as the discarded motor cars that litter suburbs.

Some secondary schools do an engineering skills or significant part and kudos—but nothing like enough to satisfy the potential. So long as we record academic learning as the only valid learning, the engineering strand of education just dies.

May I further add that, by the criteria of modern brain physiology, the mind of a good engineer is first-class mind. It is the value of the secondary system, in general, that are so desperately out of tune.

JAMES HEMMING,
31 Broom Water,
Teddington,
Middlesex.

A domestic matter

Sir—I write to take issue with your "Comment" article (October 17) under the heading "If you can beat them". Referring to the decision of the European Court of Justice in the *ax-tyre* case, the article states that the use of the law in Scotland school is a "little Englander" and you put it: "I voted in favour of joining the EEC at the referendum and would do so again; but I do not feel that this is incompatible with a wish for this country to be able to make its own decisions as to the nature of its domestic law."

I am not a "little Englander" and I am not a "domestic matter" which category surely includes methods of discipline in some schools. If a multinational community sitting in Strasbourg is to be allowed to tell us that we may not speak to our "naughty" children, then I have grave doubts about the value of our making this sacrifice to sovereignty.

I am surprised that you report this decision, even if (as you say) British public and professional opinion still staunchly defend the use of the cane. I do not wish to revive the argument over the use of the cane, but I do wish to revive the argument over the use of corporal punishment, which have become a permanent feature of our education system, and even go so far as to report that many of the schools in the country are still using it.

As we are now faced with the prospect of falling rolls and empty classrooms, perhaps it is not too much to hope that other schools will follow Rochdale's example and grasp the opportunities to provide community nursery education in a more economical fashion than by establishing separate and often very expensive units.

C. F. HALL,
Headteacher,
Queensway School, Rochdale.

LETTERS

World studies in action

Sir—Rick Rogers ("The Global School", September 26) captures accurately the energy and commitment which world studies often generate in teachers. He is right, too, that world studies can make an effective national impact.

It needs, however, to be added that, while there are a number of CSE and O level courses running in different parts of the country, the advocates and teachers of world studies often do not consider it as another subject to be squeezed onto the curriculum: except in new schools, such as Groby, there is in any case very little chance of this.

In many schools world studies is seen as a perspective, a global dimension, which can be applied to every subject—if most easily in the humanities—and which can be conveyed in a variety of ways: world days and weeks, international correspondence links, and conferences.

The constant theme which runs through courses and projects alike is perhaps an approach to method which draws out the connections between individuals, the local community and the wider world, and which emphasises active participation in the time and the energy, such as those undertaken at Groby, can frequently provide pupils with an opportunity to work on global problems or the local level, thus helping to foster skills of democratic participation and to forestall feelings of helplessness and desecration.

A further point that needs to be added to the article is the extent of world studies activity in Britain. The World Studies Project, in association with the World Studies Teacher Education Network, is in the midst of a good engineering first-class mind. It is the value of the secondary system, in general, that are so desperately out of tune.

May I further add that, by the criteria of modern brain physiology, the mind of a good engineer is first-class mind. It is the value of the secondary system, in general, that are so desperately out of tune.

JAMES HEMMING,
31 Broom Water,
Teddington,
Middlesex.

Environmental threat?

Sir—My association (the National Association for Environmental Education) is becoming increasingly concerned that many of the opportunities being made in education are being excessively heavily on the nature of study centres and the like. For example, education in museums, historic houses and the like, parts of school activities, which have become a permanent feature of our education system, and even go so far as to report that many of the schools in the country are still using it.

As we are now faced with the prospect of falling rolls and empty classrooms, perhaps it is not too much to hope that other schools will follow Rochdale's example and grasp the opportunities to provide community nursery education in a more economical fashion than by establishing separate and often very expensive units.

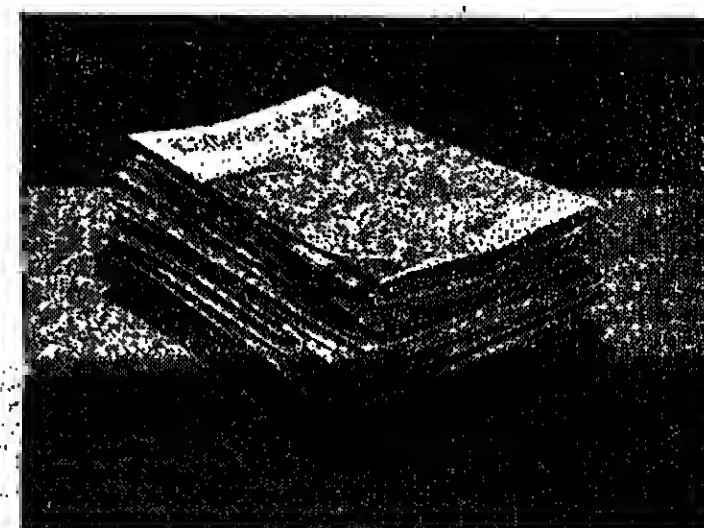
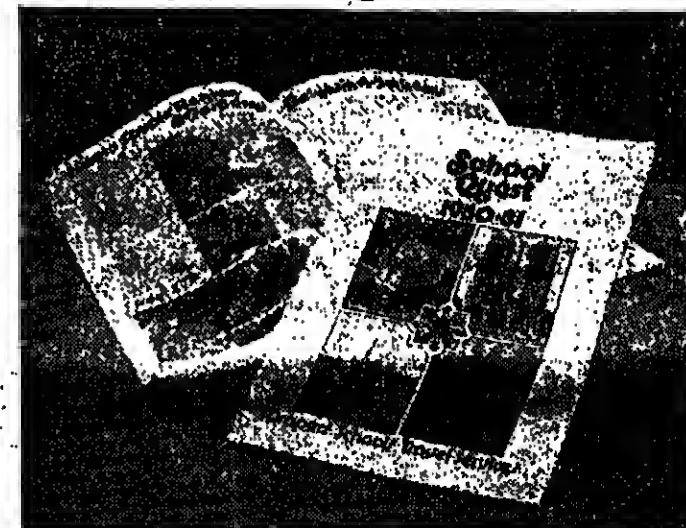
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THE MOST IMPORTANT EDUCATIONAL ISSUE OF THE DAY

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features

Yesterday saw the publication of a major study of teaching methods in primary schools. Here Virginia Makins summarises the findings of the research team, Brian Thompson provides a teacher's reaction, and John Gray examines the research methods used

One thousand hours

Virginia Makins

Different styles of primary teaching make a lot of difference to children's progress. That is the main conclusion of a major study of what goes on in primary classrooms and how children behave and progress when working with different kinds of teachers. But it is impossible to label the "success" of teachers as "formal" or "informal", using either popular or previous academic definitions of the words.

The ORACLE (for Observation Research and Classroom Learning Evaluation) project was funded by the Social Science Research Council to study primary classes, and what happens when children transfer to secondary schools. The study was directed by Brian Simon and Maurice Gifford of Leicester University. The main body of the study is more than 1,000 hours of observation in classrooms in twelve local authorities.

Fifty-eight teachers, teaching 1,404 children in 39 schools took part. The children's ages ranged from eight to 10. Each teacher was systematically observed for 10 hours each term—18 hours a year—and the main focus for the observation was the number and kinds of interactions they had with children.

Six types of teacher



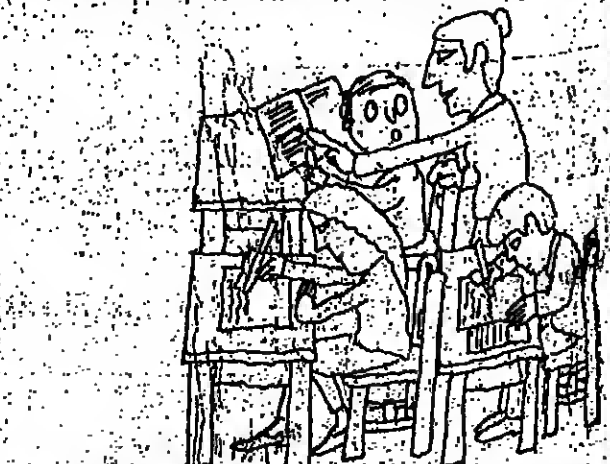
Group instructors

Spent about a fifth of their time working with groups of pupils—three times more than any other style. When doing it they concentrate more on giving pupils that they think are important information than on more interesting discussion of ideas. But they give pupils plenty of verbal feedback and ask a fair number of open questions. Children mostly work on their own, and very few demand attention from the teacher. Most group instructors took their pupils to the playground, and many made good progress on language skills, but did less well on maths and reading. They were good at listening and at arguing information from tapes and pictures, but did not shine at mapping, block graphs or original drawings.



Class inquirers

Highly organized teachers who use class teaching for 31 per cent of the time. They are clear and lucid when explaining the work, saving a lot of time for questions and this style's spontaneity—statements of ideas, children then work individually with the teacher helping, and questioning them one-to-one. Half the class inquirers were over 40, and two-thirds were men. The majority of children in their classes are "solitary workers", avoiding much verbal contact with the teacher or other children. Their pupils made most progress of any style on maths and language tests, but significantly less progress on reading than some others. They were good at posing questions, less good at mapping and block graphs, and low on originality.



Infrequent changers

Plowden super-teachers who, by efficient organization and hard work, interact with children for 90 per cent of the time and achieve a high level of individualization. They make "background" and carefully planned switches in classroom organization—between class and individual work—depending on the needs of a particular class. They ask children more questions than any other teachers, and more interesting questions. They encourage children to work out their own answers, and encourage children to ask for attention. They were infrequent changers, over 50. Their pupils made more progress than any other group on reading and maths, but less on language tests, and less well on mapping, but less well on other kinds of work.



Individual monitors

Very rarely one-to-one with children, using lower levels of group and class teaching than the other styles. They spend a lot of time, briefly, telling children what to do, rather than discussing ideas, and most of the work. In fact they talk less than other teachers, and the children in their classes are "intermittent workers" who mix work with social chat. They were mostly young teachers. Their pupils made rapid progress on reading, but came out worst in progress on maths and language tests. They did well on block graphs, and produced the most original drawings of all, but were bad at mapping and sequencing a story told in sounds.



Habitual changers

Switch about unpredictably from class teaching to individual work as a response to the behaviour of the class. They use the fewest open questions and store-nights of ideas of any style, and are the most likely to go in for small talk with children. They believe in topic work, and spend the least time directly on the basics. Habitual changers are mostly in their 20s, and women. Their pupils made among the least progress on reading and maths, and although not among the worst at language skills, they still progressed significantly worse than the other styles. But they did best overall on the study skills, particularly block graphs, mapping and sequencing a story told in sounds.



Rotating changers

Organize their classrooms so that different groups of pupils work on different curriculum areas at the same time. When the teacher gives the signal, they all change over—with groups either physically swapping places, or swapping curriculum materials. One result can be discipline problems, and rotating changers go in for more criticism of children, and verbal attempts to control them, than other styles. They are mostly in their 20s. Their children came out among the worst on every test of progress on basic skills, and on every study skill, except one—and even for that they did significantly worse than the most successful style. The Oracle comments that this is "the one style that overall has little to commend it".

It's the style that counts

Eight pupils in each class, chosen to represent a balance of sexes and abilities, were also separately observed. Some results of the study were published early this year. A major conclusion—that it was possible to identify six teaching styles, and four types of pupil, and that the different teaching styles produced different behaviour among pupils—has now been backed up by results with different teachers in the second year of the study.

The pupils were tested at the beginning and end of the year for their progress in the basic skills of maths, reading, and language use. Their competence at "study skills" was also tested, and things such as their levels of motivation were assessed. The results appear in a second book published yesterday. And it seems that the six teaching styles (see notes below) produced very different results.

Two types of teacher stood out on the basics. The most successful overall were the Infrequent Changers—careful organizers, who aim to get children working on their own. On three shortened versions of the Richmond tests for reading, maths and language skills, their pupils progressed better than any others on reading, and did almost as well as the best on maths and language.

Pupils of the second type of teacher, the Class Inquirers—lucid explainers who spend nearly a third of the time class teaching—made more progress than any on mathematics and language skills. But on reading, they did significantly worse than the pupils of Infrequent Changers and Individual Monitors, who tend to work one-to-one with children. Another kind of teacher, the Group Instructors, who favour rather didactic group teaching, came out third best overall on the basics.

How little pupils spent practising the basic skills as such seemed to make no difference to their progress. But it did appear that teachers who included class teaching in their armoury of techniques did best on mathematics and language skills. For reading, what seemed to matter was plenty of individual teaching.

The most successful styles were mostly used by more experienced teachers, in what might be called the "middle years" of their careers. But the researchers claim that their calculations show it was the teaching style, not the age of the teachers, that made the difference. External factors such as the social class of pupils or the size of classes did not explain the different rates of progress with different teaching styles. Motivation levels made a difference to pupils' progress to the classes of the three least successful types of teacher. But the three most successful styles for the basics got

all their pupils going, whatever their motivation levels. And none of the four pupil types identified in the first book did markedly better or worse than the others.

The ORACLE team also devised tests of "study skills" (such as understanding and presenting maps and block graphs) and other abilities teachers value (such as listening with understanding, picking up information by other means than reading, and originality). Pupils were tested on these only once, so the results measured their performance, not their progress. On these skills, the Habitual Changers, whose pupils did not shine on the basics, did the best overall, followed by the Class Inquirers, the Individual Monitors, and the Infrequent Changers.

Finally, the 11 most successful teachers of all, representing the three most successful styles for basic skills, were studied. It turned out that they shared various qualities. Their classrooms were fairly quiet. Routine organization was smooth, wasting little class time. Instructions were given clearly and economically, leaving plenty of time for interesting questions and ideas. They gave children a lot of feedback, and encouraged them to solve their own problems. And they managed simply to have more direct contact with pupils than other teachers.

Progress and Performance in the Primary Classroom, edited by Maurice Galton and Brian Simon (Routledge and Kegan Paul, £8.95, £5.95 paperback). See also Inside the Primary Classroom by Galton, Simon and Groll (Routledge, 1980).

Spirit of the ant heap

Brian Thompson

In writing the Oracle, would answer questions with a mixture of ambiguity and irony. Its utterances were attended by madness and fury. The Oracle is neither dramatic nor deceptive, but its findings are intriguing and controversial.

Progress and Performance in the Primary Classroom, i.e. continuation and extension of work published earlier this year. (A lot of the material in the first volume is useful when considering the

findings of the second.) It is concerned with the pedagogy, and not the philosophy, of primary schools. It describes and discusses what the observers found in the classes they visited.

The nature of the research has led to an emphasis on those elements of classroom interaction that can be tested and tabulated. In its pursuit of the quantifiable, it categorizes teaching styles and pupil types. This is not an entirely negative procedure and I imagine that few teachers would positively welcome a statistical analysis of their teaching.

If, however, the methodology provides us with insights into the reasons for our success and failure, then we must tolerate the techniques for the value of the conclusions. In general, this research is presented with tact and sympathy, in places teachers are addressed and their own feelings of frustration and isolation, or hogging the attention of the teacher, I wanted to resurrect the words of Dickens at the Grange, or when the response of HM Inspectors to primary schools who reported that "it is hardly the case that the more able children within a class were the least likely to be doing work that was sufficiently challenging."

One of the many themes of both books is a sustained attack on the teaching techniques recommended by the Plowden report. In the light of the descriptions of the Oracle team, it would be said that Plowden were seen solely as recommending methodology. If these dull and plodding classes are typical of our junior schools, then we need the concerted efforts of Plowden. It would be lamentable if that report became equated only with impossible demanding teaching techniques, or was seen as a pedagogical ideal, an unattainable ideal to be disregarded in this brave new world of efficient instruction in basics.

The book has pages of analysis and discussion, 67 tables, classification, percentages. (Though it may be statistically valid to convert fractions of a sample of 59 teachers to percentages, it does lend an air of spurious generality—15.5 per cent sounds more impressive than 16 teachers.) After all this, some discussions of relevant research, and many subjects we are left with an enormous mass of conclusions.

Some of the findings are unsurprising. Effective teaching is characterized by routines, open-ended questions and a considerable degree of interaction with the children. Class teaching is effective if the teacher is skilled enough to take all the class with her. The expert teacher tends to be more successful than the inexperienced.

The book articulates and discusses many of our perceptions about our professional skills. But sometimes, looking at some of the exemplifications of the teaching types in the first volume (such as Mr C, the rotating changer, with his discipline problems), one wonders how far problems are those of competence rather than style.

There is a witty dissection of the technique in Alan Bennett's new play Enjoy, full of relevant quotes—"Don't take this down yet, we're not being typical yet."

It may be that the knowledge of the presence of the observer led to the kinds of lessons encountered by the team. They do seem depressingly imbued with the spirit of the ant heap. Only those children classified as "intermittent workers" seem to have had a reasonable reaction to the oppressive pedagogy of the lessons, managing a surreptitious social life while attempting to satisfy the pedantic demands of the teacher. Who would wish to be an offender in such a system?

The report presents a most disturbing picture of groups of children industriously and isolated, or hogging the attention of the teacher. I wanted to resurrect the words of Dickens at the Grange, or when the response of HM Inspectors to primary schools who reported that "it is hardly the case that the more able children within a class were the least likely to be doing work that was sufficiently challenging."

One of the many themes of both books is a sustained attack on the teaching techniques recommended by the Plowden report. In the light of the descriptions of the Oracle team, it would be said that Plowden were seen solely as recommending methodology. If these dull and plodding classes are typical of our junior schools, then we need the concerted efforts of Plowden. It would be lamentable if that report became equated only with impossible demanding teaching techniques, or was seen as a pedagogical ideal, an unattainable ideal to be disregarded in this brave new world of efficient instruction in basics.

The book has pages of analysis and discussion, 67 tables, classification, percentages. (Though it may be statistically valid to convert fractions of a sample of 59 teachers to percentages, it does lend an air of spurious generality—15.5 per cent sounds more impressive than 16 teachers.) After all this, some discussions of relevant research, and many subjects we are left with an enormous mass of conclusions.

Some of the findings are unsurprising. Effective teaching is characterized by routines, open-ended questions and a considerable degree of interaction with the children. Class teaching is effective if the teacher is skilled enough to take all the class with her. The expert teacher tends to be more successful than the inexperienced.

The book articulates and discusses many of our perceptions about our professional skills. But sometimes, looking at some of the exemplifications of the teaching types in the first volume (such as Mr C, the rotating changer, with his discipline problems), one wonders how far problems are those of competence rather than style.

There are important warnings for teachers—do not dilute class teaching, learn to be flexible in your teaching styles, beware test management and marking occupy all your teaching time, look for disjunctions between your intentions and your performance.

Progress and Performance in the Primary Classroom is a rich and complex report. The validity of the research depends on the extent to which the reader accepts the classes as typical, the methodology as appropriate, the classifications as meaningful, the tests as indicative of overall success, and the extent to which the examination of these things is relevant to the wider curriculum, and to education as a whole.

It is in many ways a difficult study, and it is not in a form which would make it most accessible to teachers. But it is directly and indirectly concerned with many of the most important issues in primary schools in Britain.

Brian Thompson is Head of Dorell Primary School, Richmond upon Thames. He is also the co-author of Breakthrough to Literacy.

How good were the tests?

John Gray

The second volume of the ORACLE project provides the most sophisticated answer to date on the effects of different primary teaching styles on pupils' progress. Its major strength is that it is based on data collected by systematic classroom observation.

The resulting wealth of information underlines the complexities of primary school teaching, and the series of compromises which teachers must wrestle with. The study stands in stark contrast to Neville Bennett's earlier work on teaching styles. And the attempt to test "study skills" adds an important dimension to existing research.

One important question teachers will want to ask about the research is how good were the tests used to measure progress. The maths component of the Richmond Tests of Basic Skills was fairly favourably received by a working party of experienced maths teachers, who undertook a critical review of the tests available.

The group commented, however, that the maths tested "is very much of the traditional form", while ranging well beyond the four computational rules, and that the more advanced items were "tests of language, as well". The reading tests are likely to have tapped the skills of vocabulary and comprehension which the vast majority of primary school teachers would aim to impart.

But there may be less consensus about the relative importance and relevance of the tests of "language skills" (spelling, punctuation, capital letters and usage) for children of this age, and about the order and stage at which the various "study skills" should be acquired.

Unfortunately the researchers decided to construct their own shortened versions of the Richmond tests to ease the testing burden on schools. Although extensive piloting was undertaken, there must be some doubts about the adequacy of the tests actually administered.

A particularly problematic example is the reading test, where there was a sudden jump in the level of difficulty of the items towards the end of the test. Simple and straightforward factual questions based on understanding three short paragraphs were followed immediately by questions on a densely packed poem. More than 90 intermediate graded items seem to have been omitted.

This jump will not have had much influence on the results of the younger children, but it will have almost certainly limited the scope for older, perhaps less able, children to show steady and equivalent progress. This, in turn, may have had implications for the relative success of the various teaching styles, since some of them had more older children than others, and the claims for differences between teaching styles rest, in every case, on the children's answers to at most two or three items.

There may also be problems with the research sample. It is unfortunate that a study of such obvious relevance, and quality it should have seemed necessary to combine research on teaching styles with questions relating to transfer procedures to secondary schools.

One consequence of this compromise

was that the 58 teachers were spread across three local authorities and, more importantly, three age-groups (eight plus to 10 plus). There are enough problems doing research of this type on one age-group, let alone three. It is a complex task to decide whether sufficient of the potentially vast range of confounding factors that might impinge on the results have been controlled for, although the research takes account of a number of important ones.

In contrast to other studies, the ORACLE team have ranged widely in their search for possible alternative explanations for their findings. As a result they succeed in making their case that much more convincing. Their evidence on the importance of teacher experience is just one example of this approach. Nevertheless there are several other points to which answers would be useful before one can be fully confident that the differences observed in pupil progress were largely attributable to differences in teaching styles.

First, the researchers chose to use the pupils' raw test scores to assess progress, rather than adjusting and standardizing scores to take account of the different age-groups involved. It would be interesting to know whether the pattern of results would change if age-standardized scores were employed.

Second, there is an emerging consensus that in this kind of study it may be better to take the score of a whole class as the unit of analysis, rather than the scores of individual children. It would be useful to know whether the "league tables" of teaching styles to the penultimate chapter would take the same form when the class was used as the basis on which to test the effects of style.

The researchers recognize the problem. But from the results they present when they take the class as the unit of analysis, it looks as though the differences in effectiveness between styles is less clear cut. And at the end of the day, the study is based on 58 teachers, which may not be a sufficiently large sample to make confident generalizations about all teachers in junior schools.

Third, given previous research on this question, it would be interesting to know whether the styles identified as "successful" in the first year of the study were equally effective in subsequent years. Despite these reservations, the final chapters deserve to be widely read. They successfully prompt questions about what constitutes effective teaching, without being dogmatic about the answers.

Perhaps the most important message to emerge is that there is no single "best" way. As one of my colleagues has observed, the ways of failing as a teacher are limited, but there may be several alternative paths to excellence. Studies which move us closer to this realization, and which help us to understand what to do and what to avoid, are to be welcomed.

John Gray is a lecturer in education at the University of Sheffield.

features

What is an ombudsman—and would such a service make any difference to children? Strictly, it is Swedish for spokesman or representative. But it has been liberally interpreted and developed by numerous countries, including Britain.

Depending on where you live, an "ombudsman" could be an investigator, administrator, diplomat, publicist, advocate, even a law enforcer—all, ostensibly, on behalf of the citizen. Popularly, an ombudsman's task is assumed to be the investigation of a citizen's complaint of injustice by some public body—a local or health authority, a government department—and trying to put matters right.

Britain's ombudsman services or commissions (parliamentary, health and local) do little for children. A mere 9 per cent of complaints that go to the ombudsman directly relate to children, who incidentally make up 28 per cent of the population. The local ombudsmen—there are six in the United Kingdom—can recall only one child complainant.

The restrictions that surround educational complaints, for example, are such that few if any consequences go through the ombudsmen. No internal school or college matters can be investigated. Conduct, curriculum, organization, management and discipline issues are all excluded. The most common complaints are about school-place allocations and assistance with fees (to private school or for transport costs).

The British system is about the most restrictive in the world. The English local ombudsmen work under a representative body comprising the local authorities themselves. Complainants have normally to go via a local councillor rather than make direct contact. The arena of investigation is heavily circumscribed.

There is no legal power to force an authority to put matters right, or to change its ways. The ombudsmen have an inadequate budget—being reduced in line with local government cutbacks.

In consequence, there has always been dissatisfaction among a significant number of complainants—too many delays, too little power to set matters straight, too much indifference and unresponsiveness by local authorities. A 1980 survey by the lawyers' group JUSTICE confirmed the dissatisfaction. It also revealed that most complainants are middle-class, well-off and into middle age.

The ombudsmen would like things to be different. They support many of the JUSTICE report's recommendations. Some, they themselves originally recommended—notably the power to look at what goes on inside schools, and for the right of direct access. But there is scant prospect of any child-oriented initiative coming from our present ombudsmen: they have enough trouble maintaining what they do already.

In other countries the ombudsman is less shackled. Sweden has had a children's ombudsman since 1973. It is not a government post, but is run by Riksdagen—the Swedish Riksdag Children's Federation.

It is a mix of genuine watchdog and public relations unit. Apart from taking up individual cases of child abuse or exploitation, its general brief—according to Bo Carlsson, the children's ombudsman himself—is to "identify the needs of children and to make sure those needs are satisfied".

In addition, there is a governmental Children's Rights Committee attached to the Justice Ministry—both have close links with the ombudsman. Formed in 1977, this committee has already negotiated an Act forbidding parents from subjecting their children to physical punishment or other inhuman or humiliating treatment. Corporal punishment in schools was abolished in 1982. Barren.

The committee is presently pushing for new divorce laws based on children's needs—for example, giving children access to parents and other relatives irrespective of parental wishes; and allowing for the transfer of parental responsibility even when the natural parents are not considered "unfit" parents—as when a child has spent a long period in a foster home.

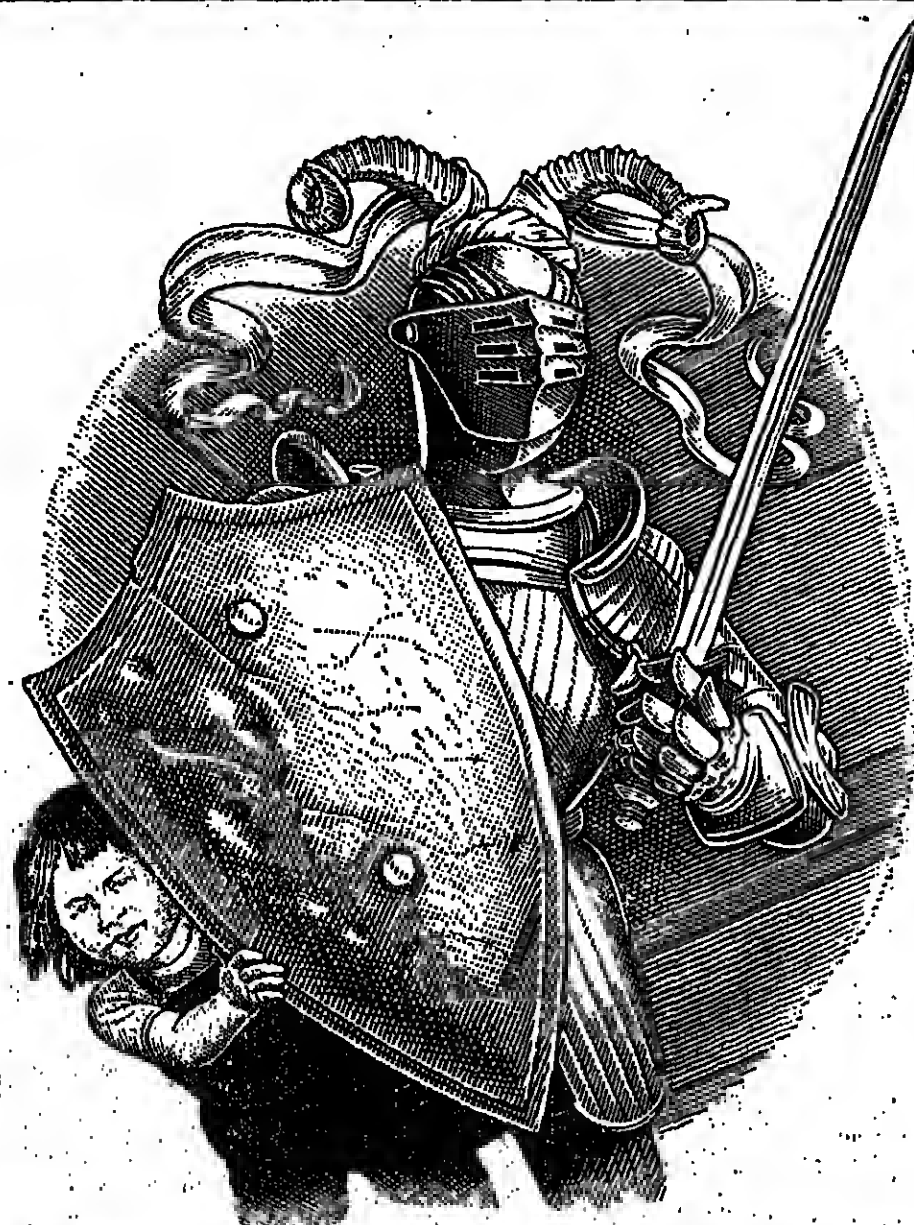
The Norwegian parliament is considering a proposal for an official children's ombudsman to start work early next year. If approved, this will have advisory rather than law enforcement or executive powers. Its brief will be to monitor local and central authorities; take up specific problems; lay down formal principles in dealing with children; highlight defects in the law; press for improvements; and ensure that Acts already passed are in fact implemented. It should be able to intervene on its own initiative, and represent children's interests in planning enquiries.

The United States has a series of "instituting" child advocacy bodies, which fall short of full "ombudsmen" status. Countries as diverse as Spain and New Zealand (where a Children's Commissioner is proposed) are showing keen interest in such schemes.

The financial outlay for ombudsman-style schemes is relatively small. The Swedish service costs around £200,000 a year, the English local ombudsman service £75,000 plus. But the key issue is really how such a concept can be welded effectively on to the British way of doing things.

Talking about extending citizens' rights via an official watchdog was, until recently, popular with all three major political parties. The Tories have, in the past, called for a dismembered ombuds-

There is now a serious debate beginning on whether Britain should have a children's ombudsman. Rick Rogers explores some of the issues, and looks at what other countries have been doing



On the side of the child?

projects, local and national lobbying, information and advice.

Central to its work is the commitment to strengthen and initiate better ways of representing children—in care proceedings, court hearings, schools, hospitals, hostels. That means taking on test cases to challenge existing unsatisfactory legal interpretations and to clarify damaging ambiguities. There will be efforts to set up codes of practice for local authorities—and others—to work to when dealing with children.

Other well-promoted ideas include a Minister for Children, an Under-Secretary, more effective use of parliamentary lobbies or panels, and a Children's Commission on the lines of the Equal Opportunities Commission.

A further suggestion is for new-style family courts, to handle all cases of children and family issues. These, it is proposed, should have what are confusingly termed "local ombudsmen" attached, to ensure children are fully represented.

A Children's Committee already exists to advise government on the "coordination and development of health and personal social services for children". That means keeping children's needs under critical review, and checking on the adequacy of voluntary and statutory services for children. Set up in October, 1978, following a recommendation by the Court committee on child health services, its future was quickly put in doubt in May, 1979, by the Government's anti-quango policy. It is likely to go before mid-1981.

Is it worth a longer run? A gathering of high-quality and cross-professional expertise (health, education, social services), positioned to influence ministers and civil servants—enlarged, better financed (its petty budget is under £50,000), more radical, pushy and innovative—could be a prototype Children's Rights Commission.

A children's ombudsman is seen as having four key roles nationally and locally: to investigate and put right injustice; to represent and mediate for children individually and as a group; to clarify law and push for improvements; and to publicize existing channels of redress and protective procedures.

Its justification has been made out by the Norwegian Consumer Affairs Ministry: "Children cannot be advocates for their own interests. They do not form lobbies or pressure groups... they do not take part in the democratic process." In Britain they are beginning to speak for themselves, as instance the self-propelled children-in-care groups, and the slow growth of pupil governors.

But does all this require a new organization, or are existing ones capable of doing these jobs? Are existing powers used enough on behalf of the young?

Current thinking among many voluntary groups seems to be "new tools for new jobs"—as instance the developing Family Forum to be a unified pressure point for families. Another argument put up for a fresh start is the difficulty (some say intractable) problem of the determination of many voluntary groups to retain their own "independence" and power bases.

Certainly "liability" is vital to the ideas success—not just between almost-like-minded organizations, but with the alleged objects of their concern, children. A new arrangement could better fit the bill—a permanent focus for children's affairs to make the right connections and draw together various and disparate disciplines, themes and policies; an agreed point too for the young.

Ranged against optimistic interpretations of the need for a children's ombudsman are the practical problems of delivering a quick, efficient service that gets results. For that, an ombudsman needs access to official files and to personnel, to be clear on priorities, to have adequate funding, to win local authority acceptance, to influence civil servants and parliament.

The salutary experience of the local ombudsman's catalyst has been dismissed. So would a new service be better off under government sponsorship or wholly independent? If government, how free would it be? If independent, how would it acquire the powers it obviously needs?

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Children's Committee, Mary Ward House, 5 Tavistock Place, London, WC1 (01-387 9681).

Children's Legal Centre, 2 Malden Road, London, SW9 (01-267 6392).

History as paranoia

C. W. E. Bigsby on a comparative analysis of race in nineteenth-century America

Iron Cages: Race and Culture in Nineteenth-Century America. By Ronald T. Takaki. The Athlens Press £12.50. 485 11213 2.

Thomas Jefferson, framer of the Declaration of Independence and one of the principal architects of American democracy, wrote of the Indians in the climactic year 1776: "Nothing will reduce those wretches so soon as pushing the war into the heart of their country. But I would not stop there. I would never cease pursuing them while one of them remained on this side [of the Mississippi]." Indeed, with Congress, he believed that unless they could be coerced into submission the American forces should never cease pursuing them "until the last of them remained on earth." The only alternative to extermination lay in the proffered grace of an accommodation with Jefferson's view of a property-owning agrarian America. If they would not inhabit that myth then they were not the myth would have to be abandoned.

But, for all that, they were still seen by Jefferson as being inherently superior to the blacks who, to his mind, displayed no cultural ability and whose growing numbers suggested future apocalypses. For him the only solution lay in their removal to Africa. And yet, irritatingly, their labour was the basis of his own no less than of the national prosperity.

If the question of the relationship between these two groups and the future of the American nation met in the mind and imagination of Jefferson, so they did in the public world of political strategy. And the practical economic, political objectives and the fate of those who were partly its victims of those myths and objectives and partly the guarantee of their success is at the heart of Ronald Takaki's *Iron Cages*.

The book is offered as a study of cultural hegemony, a comparative analysis of race (or, more properly, racism) in America which attempts to relate slavery to Indian removal and the exploitation of the Chinese.

which she was called "an experienced charlatan". But the attempt to think of stereotypes as, say, "craftsmenlike", "manhandle" or "masterful" is good exercise for brain, ear and tongue, not to mention whatever organ it is that acts as a receiver and transmitter of what society believes and does.

The newest thing about feminist neologisms is that for the first time we can be sure that it's women doing the inventing. It was a man who first had the bright idea of referring to women as "be" when they were part of a mixed group like a cocktail party or the human race. Dale Spender has identified him as one John Kirkby, an eighteenth-century prescriptive grammarian, who offers it as one of his 88 rules that the male gender is "more comprehensive" than the female, thus giving birth to "the generic man". Eighteenth-century grammarians not being so notably mixed group, professionally speaking, this idea met with no resistance.

personhood

Generic Man, once Dale Spender has finished with him, is clearly as spurious as Mr Piddington. Again, apply her simple test: "Men's vital interests are life, food, access to females etc." OK? Then how about: "Men's being a mammal, breastfeeding his young, not so OK. So, trust for the 'mammal' ombrageous women" chestnut.

It is not only within language that myths about women are embedded. There are also folk-beliefs about how women use it. Linguists, cherishing these beliefs, have extensively tested hypotheses that women's language is, by nature, more hesitant and tentative, with more appeals for confirmation and approval, as in "That's a nice hat, isn't it?" or "Perhaps you should do your homework now?" The same linguists found men used more "potheses" unprovoked. In fact men used more "potheses" than women. And what about "fact"? It is the rule, so convincingly documented by Dale Spender, that makes neologisms like "chirperton" useless on their own. If the language works that way, then eventually a new term, such as "lady chirperton" will relate to a very simple woman's use of the language of the sex and "pothetion" will take place. It's no good just tinkering with the language when those who speak it and hear it read it and write it are still living in a sexist society. On the other hand, where living in a sexist society long before we knew that was what we could call it.

Anyway it's a relief to know we don't have to strain after our own words and they do have advantages: so academic colleagues can be respectably given a reference in

Mary Hoffman

review

But beyond this it seeks to demonstrate how these in turn relate to American revolutionary principles, to the emergence of a capitalist economy, to industrialization and to American expansionism. As can be imagined, with such a scheme, its vices are inevitably aspects of its virtues. Its attempt at comprehensiveness results, unavowedly, in a somewhat peremptory version of native cultural energies, a simplified model of social dynamics and a moralistic tone which insufficiently justifies itself in historical terms. None of which is incapacitating. The tendrils connecting the prejudice with which white Americans reacted to blacks or Indians and their growing contempt for a rising proletariat is instructive and largely convincing.

Professor Takaki identifies three "iron cages" which confined the self and subdued the spirit: republican ideology, bureaucratic capitalism and an imperialistic pretension. These animating ideas generated their own myths, assumptions and political exigencies. They shaped the nature not only of rhetoric but also of the moral imagination. Clearly the process whereby the groups required to generate the motor force for American expansion were displaced, expelled from the body politic as from the land, required moral justification and a supporting rhetoric. But what is less clear is whether this was rooted in a real conviction, or whether it was invoked as a potent and conscious racialization. And though he includes several interesting case studies (Thames Jefferson, Benjamin Rush and Alfred Mohon among them) he never really penetrates the individual or national psychology.

What he does offer is a view of the dominant culture. We learn little from the hook of sets of resistance, of the reality of the dense and complex cultural and social life of the various minority groups of which it treats. So that while the deformations of American idealism can be seen as a decline from a moral norm (though one stained with historical ambiguity) it is less easy to assess the degree to which these rationalizations were the product of a failure of perception and knowledge rather than morality. To be sure there was a vested interest in project-

ing the black as illiterate and shiftless, the Indian as brutal and barbaric, and the Chinese as cunning; was this the result of a wilful blindness, a calculated and cynical distortion, or a simple ignorance? The effect is the same; the moral and cultural meaning very different.

The subtext of the book suggests a paranoid view of history—history as vast interlocking conspiracy. This is, perhaps, an inevitable consequence of a methodology which sees history as "organic" and which wishes to approach "American society as a total structure". But the absence of some indication of the nature, range and strength of the black, Indian or Chinese cultures leaves the reader, by placing the blame on the motives, test the rhetoric, or assess the validity of these whose response to America's minority groups was first to ridicule or denounce and then to exploit, expel or annihilate them.

This is not inadvertent on Professor Takaki's part, however. He confesses that he has "focused on the culture-makers and policy-makers, on the white men to positions of influence and power". He is interested in those who define the myths no less than the realities of a country, which lived its history self-consciously. He is concerned with the process whereby as America grew physically so it betrayed the pious ideal with which it began. If John Locke had offered a potent and central image when he observed that "In the beginning of all the world was America, then Tékaki is interested in the loss of American innocence. It is a valuable approach and there is a limit to the scope of any book but there is a risk that the cultural groups of which he speaks will be relegated to the same ebbelidly role in his book that he accuses American political and industrial figures of doing in fact.

Andrew Jackson was clearly right in recognizing that how whites conducted themselves in their relations with Indians had a definitional influence on national character. In that he might well have extended this to include all minority groups. The irony, of course, was that this was a moral test which the nation, no less than Jackson himself, failed. Why this should be so and how American ideology accommodated itself to this failure is in large part the subject of *Iron Cages*.

Waugh of words

Edward Blishen on Evelyn Waugh's letters

The Letters of Evelyn Waugh. Edited by Mark Amory. Weidenfeld and Nicolson £14.95. 297 77657 6.

This is an extraordinary collection of letters, which seems to provide rather simple illumination of the nature of an apparently complex man and his work. It will give ammunition to those who find him disagreeable, and a champion of disagreeable opinions; it will also give them pause, for again and again it displays Waugh in the most charming and tender light, especially in his family letters, and as a man perfectly aware of his own limitations, and better than he comes at describing them.

Above all—and contrary to the complaint one hears that the letters throw no light on him as a writer—they are full of characteristically terse references to his work, all of which demonstrate his total seriousness, not on order. There is a letter to his wife that explains why he longs for her company at all times except one. "When I am working," he writes, "I must be alone. I should never be able to maintain the fervour of composition which is absolutely necessary for my own limitations, and better than he comes at describing them.

What is really extraordinary about the collection is that, from the beginning to the end of his life, his letters had the air of fiction. Compered with those of other writers' letters are lopsided into behind-the-scenes sabbath. His loved gossip: he positively begged his correspondents to provide him with it. The nature of the novels becomes clearer: it is the spirit of gossip, glorified, that informs them; the art we all deploy to turn unmanageable life into a sort of manageable fiction, and to bring out the shine of things. And it really does not mean that Waugh was not serious. Far from it. More serious than most of us, who doped along half-made up and half-actual, half in view

of the audience and half in the wings, he was always on stage. As men and artists he was enormously difficult.

There are things here to gladden the use of the words "jew" and "panay", his chilling support for capital punishment ("It would be a great convenience to know well in advance the date of one's death"). But see his sensible, careful letter to a young writer (Alex Comfort): or his letter to a daughter who had taken against school in a fit of adolescent paranoia—an attitude Waugh counters by feigning to share it. He tells her how sorry he is about "the savage persecution of Mother Beldget", but promises that his daughter "will soon appear in the courts suing her for libel. Damages will be so heavy that no doubt the school will have to close down."

They're very funny in fact, many of these letters. They have his bobs of comic exaggeration. So he weeps, even when writing to his wife, his mask of the man who's forgotten how many children he has: "I told him there were four. I hope that was right." When he takes against some institution equally solemnly, he solemnly uses the most amusingly unbuttoned phrases of dissent: of Frost, "The chap was plain bumpy". He is outraged by the force of space travel: "Really, to spend millions of pounds of public money in setting off worldwide fireworks" is Mr Groucher of Toytown, but greatly witty with it, and very much aware of the drawbacks of being Mr Groucher: "Pray do not suppose that my inability to enjoy modern art is a source of pride to me. I deplore it." He's severely aware too of the linked world he has shaped himself into: "The sad thing is that Metroland is my world and I don't know any other except at second hand."

The editing by Mark Amory is first-class. Much of it, as he says, consisted of discovering the molasses from which Waugh had fashioned some "mountain of embellishment".

media Matters of life

Carolyn O'Grady on two programmes on pregnancy and abortion

ETV
General Studies
Unit 3 Life and Death Before Birth
An Everyday Miracle
November 10, 11
Abortion
November 17, 18

Rather insensitively banded together in one unit in the BBC General Studies series this term are two programmes on pregnancy and abortion; together they form a unit entitled *Life and Death Before Birth*.

An *Everyday Miracle* takes a young couple, Peter and Tessa, and follows Tessa through her pregnancy. It is an account of what happens inside the womb, the hazards threatening the normal development of a baby and Tessa's feelings. The programme also contains some pretty amazing film of the inside of the womb showing ovulation and fertilisation and the growing baby. The film was taken using minute optical instruments to see directly inside the body and is something of a scoop for Schools. Television will be shown on general BBC Television later in the year.

This sequence is awesome in its own right and it is a pity therefore that the programme makers weren't confident enough to waive the very intrusive music and allow the film to speak for itself.

In other ways, too, the material seems to have been handled differently; the mood changes are bewildering. One minute the tone is extremely matter-of-fact, the next romantic, and elsewhere almost gaudy.

Thus we have Peter and Tessa walking in the rain in the spring time while light music plays in the background and the narrator explains that she has just discovered she is pregnant and a few minutes later a doctor is listening over Tessa's enlarging stomach describing in incredible detail (and real doctor would spare this amount of detail) the role of an ultrasound. The producer's laudable desire to en-

courage a sense of wonder at the birth process appears to have collided with the need to get across the mundane facts about pregnancy. However, even the music cannot detract from the amazing inside-the-womb sequence and for many people might not do so at all.

The programme on *Abortion* is the first on this subject to be made by Schools Television. It goes immediately into the facts which make its production necessary today: abortion is one of the commonest surgical operations; 350 abortions are performed each day; and then looks at the law and outlines briefly the history of abortion. Film of an anti-abortion march and then a pro-abortion march then sets the tone for the rest of the programme and from here on it is mainly a series of monologues by a para-abortion doctor and an anti-abortion clergyman, interspersed with an interview with a silhouetted girl who had her baby adopted and an apparently happy young woman who decided to keep her child.

The format seems unnecessarily restricted; could we not have had some more speakers including a woman who had had an abortion? And why choose a clergyman as the anti-abortion representative. To some pupils this might imply that only the religious take an anti-abortion stance, while agnostics and atheists would find it difficult to relate to the arguments.

The doctor too occasionally appears to be an unfortunate choice of speaker. Most viewers, I think, will blanch at his bland minimization of the psychological effects of abortion. Only a small proportion, he says, regret it all their lives and these are usually women who have other large problems and "would make poor mothers anyway".

At the end of the programme a head teacher comments that schools are good about teaching biology but bad about teaching about contraception and relationships. If they weren't there would be less unwanted pregnancies. These programmes are conscientious and brave but slightly ham-fisted times the role of an ultrasound. The producer's laudable desire to en-

More like a Martian

by Basil Browne

CONTINUING EDUCATION
London Weekend Television
Networked
Seven Ages
Sundays, 11 pm, From November 9

Seven Ages purports to be a series of seven documentaries based on the behavioural changes that take place during a lifetime and it is loosely intended to be educational for adults, but the programmes are not broad enough for documentaries or deep enough for education. Quasi-psychology? No sociology? Nonsense of the labris will stick, and yet within its serious limitations, it makes oddly compulsive viewing.

The first programme demonstrates how little the LWT agree correspond with Shakespeare's taking in both the mewling and puking and the creeping like small unwillingly to school. The programme makers declare themselves in difficulty talking about children under the age of three or four because of people's lack of conscious memory of infancy and because of the impossibility of getting children of that age to express themselves coherently.

Psychiatrists and others may well dispute the existence of these difficulties but the result is a good one here at least the series adds to areas for conjecture, and it can be forgiven for the sake of some of the very pleasing footage of babies and children.

Two parents talking about the sensuality of their baby offers one of the strongest sequences; how much they like touching him, how much he likes being touched, and touching himself, is dealt with in a way that combines delicacy and wonder with down to earth common sense.

A brief stop at a nursery school as we are hurried on to look at six-year-olds—children's influence on each other becomes more important?—and at seven-year-olds, with their ritualistic games, their fierce notions of fairness, and their regulation of rules. The programme about adults are very differently based. Programme three looks at young adulthood,

defined as 18-30 plus years, focused almost totally on marriage and sex with the rigid gaze of the statistician. 50 per cent of men and 75 per cent of women are married by the age of 25. 80 per cent of men and 90 per cent of women are married by the age of 30. The working classes marry earlier than the middle classes. And so on.

These patterns are broken only by the thoroughly aberrant, and remarks like the one made by the 20 year old fiancée, "obviously I have to leave home—I mean, I want to leave home" are not explored. There is a lot of emphasis on the social pressures that lead people to do certain things at certain times, but never any criticism of them and scarcely a mention of the many flourishing alternative cultures.

In the programme dealing with people in their thirties much is made of physical fitness and life experience. Women start to go to fitness classes, footballers take to coaching. A 35-year-old infantry officer demonstrates the confident, commanding manner that age is supposed to bring. The programme makers are astonished to find that women are less concerned about aging than men are.

Several of the women say their prime of life won't come until they are free of their children, that they are worried about trying to get back into a career rather than just a job. The looks of anger and even bitterness on many of the faces in the ladies' physical fitness class are accompanied by a defiant remark about leaving the housework for half a day a week. Men, meanwhile, are worrying about business, status, and the rat race. "I'd say in about 10 years' time," that's when we'll start to enjoy ourselves."

Briefings

Radio and tv

OU and general interest

Worlds Apart (Saturday, 11.25, BBC 2)

An Open University programme made for the Royal Astronomical Society and presented by Dr Gary Hunt. Broadcast to coincide with Voyager's closest approach to Saturn, "Worlds Apart" looks backwards at the creation of the universe and forwards to its destruction. The Past at Work (Monday, late night, BBC 1; Tuesday, 14.30, BBC 2)

The study of industrial archaeology continues with a look at the textile industry.



Steva McMahon who plays Tommy Stubbs in Willy Russell's play, 'Lies about school and work', 'Lies about school and work' is a second part of this much-acclaimed play, which was originally produced for Schools Television goes out on Friday November 7, BBC 2 at 7.30.

For schools

Time to Move (Monday, 10.10, VHF 1)

Six seven-year-olds spend the rest of the term learning to move with the story of the "Nutcracker". Music Time (Monday, 10.15, Thursday, 14.15, BBC 1)

Liaison with the "Time to Move" series, seven to nine-year-olds begin a unit on Christmas music.

Insight (Monday, 11.05, Friday, 11.43, TV1)

Demonstrates to hearing impaired and slow-learning secondary children how letters are delivered and how the telephone works.

Slavery and Freedom (Monday, 11.40, Tuesday, 14.05, BBC 1)

See review. Deutsch für die Oberstufe (Tuesday, 09.05, VHF 4)

Extracts from Lessing's comedy "Minna von Barneheim" for A-level students of German.

Inside Pages (Wednesday, 11.20, VHF 4)

This series of five programmes about books of interest to 10 to 12-year-olds presents a selection of fiction, and non-fiction titles on deamable nature of everybody else. The author is the black American, Julius Lester.

The English Programme (Wednesday, 11.34, Friday, 9.30, TV1)

A new set of Viewpoint programmes examining recurrent patterns in modern presentation of the four aspects of Britain today: the young, the old, the poor, the rich.

Starling Science (Thursday, 11.10, TV1)

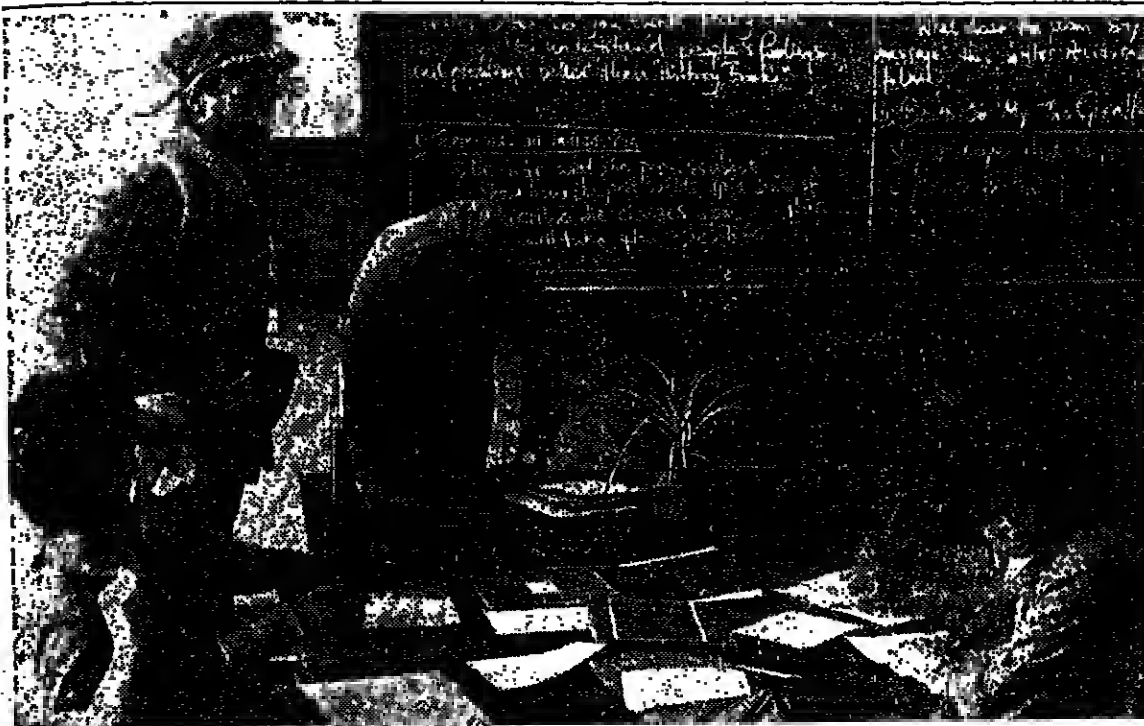
All things flow is a programme in five parts for seven to nine-year-olds about electricity and water.

Maths File (Friday, 11.40, BBC 1)

Detective Inspector Fred Newton continues his mathematical investigations into "Number Relationships".

extra

ENGLISH



Language affords insights into ourselves and others in a way no other subject can.

PROCESS AND PRODUCT

Sydney Hill discusses teamwork in English teaching

Although organization is only a means to an end, without it the work of any group of teachers will be haphazard. It is as unjustifiable for the work of English teachers to be thus as it would be for that of scientists or geographers, yet for reasons such as misplaced notions about teacher autonomy or the much-cherished mystic union between a particular teacher and a group of pupils, what happens in English often lacks the necessary and creative agreement on aims, objectives content and timing without which a unified approach cannot exist.

The task of organizing to snob planned and patterned English to happen is made doubly difficult and doubly necessary when the department consists of a team of teachers some of whom spend only a minority of their time teaching the subject. It is significant that The Schools Council English Committee identifies as one of its main priorities for the next decade the task of helping teachers of English to work and develop as a team. In Working Paper 52, English in the 1980s: a programme of support for teachers we are told:

"...only in a supportive and developing team can individuals find encouragement to expand and refine their approach to the full; indeed, only by developing and making common property the special expertise of individual members can the teachers as a team have all the skills and competence necessary for the full range of English teaching."

The onus on full-time teachers of English to help, through teamwork, themselves and non-specialist colleagues is great; and so one of the first tasks of the head of English is to create and maintain, despite change and going, a cohesive team able to offer individual specialists and interests to each other and to help and involve those teachers whose major priorities might well be in other areas.

An essential first step must be the negotiation and creation of a job specification, which when finalized needs to be set down and communicated to all who need to know and have a stake in its regular revision. Above all, it needs to be detailed, covering the seemingly obscure as well as the obvious. The duty

head or head of year teaching some English should be able to consult such a document in order to find out to whom particular lists should be handed, who is responsible for library liaison and who is in charge of stock for the year he or she teaches.

Structured negotiation, discussion and decision-making is one aspect of what makes the words "teamwork" rather more than hollow representations of reality. It involves all who teach a subject in the creation and continuing re-assessment of what that subject consists of and how they think it should be taught in an agreed priority, only through informed discussion, open exchange of views and real participation can commitment be achieved.

Apart from the job specification, there are, above all, two major items that all teams need to address themselves to at frequent intervals, however well established practice and attitudes for the subject happen to be. First a departmental statement of aims needs to be created or reviewed and secondly the scheme of work or syllabus, if it is to retain its vitality, should undergo the same procedure. All and often the former does not exist and the latter is not the working reference document from which specific and practical advice can be sought. The importance of such documentation is nowhere better stressed than in English in the 1980s where we are told:

"...it is at this point, that is, the departmental drawing up of an instrument of policy, that the curriculum of English in schools is established."

But to lay too much stress here on the document takes the eye off the ball. The fact that good practice is not the product of a great importance. The very act of reading around an aspect of the subject prior to drafting proposed elements of a syllabus for onwardment and ratification at a departmental meeting is a professional act.

Let me now enumerate some aspects of the construction and content of a scheme of work that I think needs to be considered:

1. The scheme of work: What headings and sub-headings would be most useful in covering stated aims?

2. The scope: Is there a place for advancing a covering higher order reading skills? Should suggestions about individualizing work and ways of approaching and responding in the class reader be included here or in separate documents?

3. The structure of classroom discussion: best located here?

4. Design: Given that individual items will be subject to frequent review, is it best to have separate

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